BOOK VIII

Eighth Centum- First Decad (VIII-1)
(Tēvimār āvār)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḻvār longed for the pleasure of singing Tiruvāymoḻi before the Divine couple at Tiruvāṟaṉviḷai and rendering unto Them other kinds of service as well. But then, the project did not get off the ground and non-fulfilment of his cherished desire made the Āḻvār grow sceptical of the Lord's bonafides and His ability to concede the wish of His devotees. This doubt is expressed in this decad.

The Āḻvār feels vexed that he has been thwarted from achieving his desired objective even under the most propitious circumstances. The Divine consorts are beside the Lord, reclining on the serpent-bed at Tiruvāṟaṉviḷai, ready to grant him audience and the 'Nitya Sūrīs' are also around; the Lord is omnipotent and can easily meet the aspirations of the devotees by assuming any Form, suited to the purpose and on his part, the yearning is much-too-deep. And yet, the Āḻvār could not achieve his objective, giving rise to frustration that casts doubts in his mind as to whether the well-known traits of the Lord such as His readiness to respond to the requsts of His devotees, looking upon their woes as His own, in the sense that they are but His modes etc., have become ineffective, because of him. This was precisely how Sītā bemoaned her miserable lot during her captivity in Laṅkā, seriously suspecting Śrī Rāma's intention and inclinations towards her. As a matter of fact, the saints subsist solely on the sweet contemplation of the Lord's auspicious traits and once this vital communication is cut out, they will just cease to exist. The Lord apprehended that the Āḻvār, sunk in despair under the delusion that the Lord's auspicious traits have dried up, might collapse altogether and, therefore, set at naught his doubts by calling upon him to ponder over all that He had done for him earlier and assuring Him of the due fulfilment of whatever He intended to do further for him. Thus consoled, the Āḻvār feels elevated from the erstwhile depression.

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tēvimār āvār tirumakaḷ, pūmi;
ēva, maṟṟu amarar āṭceyvār;
mēviya ulakam mūṉṟu-avai āṭci;
vēṇṭu vēṇṭu uruvam niṉ uruvam—
pāviyēṉ-taṉṉai aṭukiṉṟa kamalak
kaṇṇatu ōr pavaḷa vāy maṇiyē!
āviyē! amutē! alai kaṭal kaṭainta
appaṉē! kāṇumāṟu aruḷāy. (VIII–1–1)

Translation

Tirumakaḷ and Mother Earth are Your Consorts Divine,
(Befitting Your beauty and majesty), the Celestials are Your vassals,
(Ever ready to do Your bidding) You are the Sovereign
Of the three worlds, assume You can any Form at will;
Your lotus eyes and coral lips peerless, however, torment this sinner's soul,
Oh, gem of a Lord, dear unto me like life! Nectar insatiable,
Oh, Sire, You did the surging ocean churn, pray, let me behold you.

Note

The Lord has revealed Himself before the Āḻvār's mental vision in all His might and majesty in that glorious setting; the Divine Consorts and the Nitya Sūrīs, who make the supplicant's position safe and sound by virtue of their good offices, are around; the Lord is the Sovereign Master of all the worlds and apart from the immensity of His wealth, He is omni-potent, He churned the Milk-ocean once and delivered the 'Amrut' (ambrosia) to the self-centred and egotistic Devas and in spite of such an extremly favourable background, it is a pity He would not grant the wish of a selfless devotee of the eminence of Saint Nammāḻvār. While this very thought is depressing enough, the dejection gets accentuated when he muses over the Lord's lotus eyes, coral lips and radiant Form which he could not currently behold. Of course, the Āḻvār doesn't want the Lord to take, for his sake, the trouble of churning the ocean as He did for the selfish Devas, and all that He prays for is

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that he might be enabled to behold the Lord's bewitching Form, so as to sustain himself.

kāṇumāṟu aruḷāy eṉṟu eṉṟē kalaṅki,
kaṇṇa nīr alamara, viṇaiyēṉ
pēṇumāṟu, ellām pēṇi, niṉ peyarē
pitaṟṟumāṟu aruḷ eṇakku; antō!
kāṇumaṟu aruḷāy-kākuṭṭā! kaṇṇā!
toṇṭaṇēṉ kaṟpakaṅ kaṇiyē!
pēṇuvār amutē! periya taṇ puṇal cūḻ
peru nilam eṭutta pērāḷā! (VIII–1–2)

Translation

Agitated stands this sinner, tears flooding the eyes,
(For, many a time did I call you, eager to behold
Your Form exquisite), many a method did I adopt (which success defied)
Your grace rests merely on my prattling Your names (bad luck) alas!
Oh, Lord, You did, as Kākuttaṉ and Kaṇṇaṉ, incarnate,
You are unto this vassal the fruit of the wish-yielding tree,
Nectar of the devout, You did redeem, oh, Benefactor great,
The big Earth from deep waters, cool, may You be visible unto me.

Note

No doubt, it is the Lord's grace that makes the Āḻvār cry out for it all the time, till it actually descends on him, without indulging in any kind of aberration, egging him on to self-effort to induce His grace. An irrepressible longing for quick consummation, resulting from inordinate God-love, made an impatient Āḻvār attempt quite a few methods, aimed at acceleration of his union with the Lord but all these proved ineffective. And now, he does nothing more than mentioning the Lord's names which again is, of course, due tot he Lord's grace and stamps him out as one apart from the worldlings. But this is not enough and the Āḻvār pines for beholding the Lord's bewitching Form and he invites Him to appear before him, even as He had come down

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as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, in His incarnate Forms, making Himself visible to sages and shepherdesses and the inhabitants of the remote forests. Actually, the Lord has never been apart from Himself nor is He aware of those separated from Him; while the 'Nitya Sūrīs' (Ever-free angles) in Heaven, His proximate attendants know no separation from the Lord, the 'Nitya Samsarīs', wallowing in worldly life, are totally oblivious of Him and are, therefore, not conscious of their separation from Him. The Āḻvār is the solitary soul, at this end pining for the Lord, unable to bear the pangs of separation from Him.

eṭutta pērāḷaṉ nantakōpaṉ-taṉ
iṉ uyirc ciruvaṉē! acōtaikku
aṭutta pēriṉpak kula iḷam kaḷiṟē!
aṭiyaṉēṉ periya ammāṉē!
kaṭutta pōr avuṇaṉ uṭal iru piḷavāk
kaiukir āṇṭa em kaṭalē!
aṭuttatu ōr uruvāy iṉṟu nī vārāy-
eṉṉaṉam tēṟuvar umarē? (VIII–1–3)

Translation

The little one dear as life unto Nantakōpan, the great Treasure-grasper,
Acōtai's vicarious Joy personified, the elephant calf of that clan You are,
Oh, Benefactor great, Who did unto this vassal Your glory reveal,
An ocean of compassion unto the devout, You tore off with Your nails,
Avuṇaṉ, the battle-hungry, into halves and yet, now You appear not
Before me, taking up the Form You deem fit; (should you thus neglect),
How can devotees like me trust You (as the Protector great)?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār's enquiry, as above, could either point out to the Lord, how at all His devotees can sustain themselves

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if He doesn't oblige them with His sweet presence, the great Elixir of life, but keeps away, as He is doing at present,

or

express the doubt as to how His reputation as the henchman of His devotees, aired through the Scriptures, the Itihāsa Purāṇas etc., with a great deal of fanfare and publicity, could be taken for granted, without the concrete proof thereof, especially when He is keeping aloof from the Āḻvār, despite his passionate longing for His immediate presence.

(ii) Nandagopa is aptly referred to, as the great Treasure-grasper inasmuch as the Lord (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) crossed over to him on the very night of His descent into this world. Nanda hadn't even dreamt of this windfall and yet, the Lord of the Universe, higher than the highest (Para Brahmam), at His sweet volition, courted Nanda's courtyard, regaling him in a thousand ways, while the luckless Vasudeva had to be contented with a mere glimpse of the Divine Babe, born in the Prison-house, only to get out of it immediately. This makes all the difference between 'Svagata svīkāra' (i.e.) courting the Lord as the 'Means' and 'Paragata svīkāra' (i.e.) the condescending love of the Lord shed on some one of His choice, at His sweet volition. Is there indeed a greater Treasure than the Lord Who resides right inside every one and yet can be enjoyed only by the felicitous few? Nandagopa is, therefore, rightly acclaimed as the great Treasure-lifter, who didn't have to lift the Treasure, as such, but could enjoy it like one who comes by a fabulous treasure-trove by sheer luck. Even so, the lion's share of the enjoyment of this great Treasure went to Acōtai (Yaś dhā) who played the mother of the Divine Babe, a role which should have actually been filled by poor Devakī. The bliss enjoyed by Yaśodhā was indeed several times more than that enjoyed by the Celestials in the High Heavens.

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(iii) *The elephant calf*: A mighty animal though, the elephant meekly submits itself to be tethered to a peg which could be easily uprooted, with but a small jerk of the huge frame of the beast. The Almighty Lord submitted Himself to the yoke of Yaśodhā who tied Him fast to a pounder, as if He was such a helpless pigmy and then, the Gopīs (the damsels of Virundāvan) would order Him about. Oh, what an amazing submissiveness! The Āḻvār too seems to feel, according to Nampiḷḷai, that the Lord could have as well been directed and controlled by him even as Nandagopa and Yaśodhā did, assuming the 'vātsalya' stance instead of following the 'Master-servant' relationship, allowing Him to play the over-bearing overlord who would not mingle freely with His subjects.

(iv) 'Avuṇaṉ' is the Tamil word for Hiraṇya whom Lord Narasimha tore down, all for the sake of that little lad, Prahlāda. The Āīvār would seem to feel that he is not obliged by the Lord Who did so much for that young chap. The Āḻvār is even led to suspect whether the Lord had hired out all those Sages, Vyāsa, Parāśara etc., to lavish all those epithets on Him, which do not actually fit in with Him, At least to clear up such misgivings lurking in the Āḻvār's mind, the Lord should appear before him, assuming an appropriate Form.

umar ukantu ukanta uruvam niṉ uruvam
āki, uṉ-taṉakku aṉpar āṉār-
avar ukantu amarnta ceykai un māyai
aṟivu oṉṟum caṅkippaṉ viṇaiyēṉ-
amar atu paṇṇi, akal iṭam puṭai cūḻ
aṭu paṭai avitta ammāṉē!
amarar-tam amutē! acurarkaḷ nañcē!
eṉṉuṭai ār uyirēyō! (VIII–1–4)

Translation

My Lord, the battle (of Mahā Bhārata) You brought on to quell the cruel armies, spread across, nectar You are unto the

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Celestials, Deadly poison You are unto Asuras and dear life unto me! You assume
The Form dear unto Your devotees, the wondrous deeds, You perform,
Endear You unto the devout; this sinner is, however, led to suspect
Whether all that is said of You is at all correct.

Note

The Āḻvār hitherto subsisted on the sure and certain knowledge that God subserves His devotees, ready to do their bidding and assume the Forms they devoutly long to enjoy. But his knowledge and faith, in this great trait of the Lord, are getting shaken, in his present state of dejection. The Lord is undoubtedly the repository of innumerable auspicious traits and it is the Āḻvār's sins, as he puts it, that makes him stand apart from Him and even go to the length of suspecting this unassailable position of the Lord.

ār uyirēyō! akal iṭam muḻutum
paṭaittu, iṭantu, uṇṭu, umiḻntu, aḷanta
pēr uyirēyō! periya nīr paṭaittu, aṅku
uṟaintu, atu kaṭaintu, aṭaittu, uṭaitta
cīr uyirēyō! maṇicarkkut tēvar
pōlat tēvarkkum tēvâvō!
ōr uyirēyō! ulakaṅkaṭku ellām!—
uṉṉai! nāṉ eṅku vantu uṟukō? (VIII-1-5)

Translation

You are my life dear, oh Lord! You did create
The spacious worlds, one and all, pulled them out
From beneath the waters deep, during the deluge ate
And later spat them out, the Supreme Lord that You are,
You spanned the worlds, reposed on the vast sheet of water,
Churned the ocean once, then bunded it and broke the bund later;
Could You unto Devas be what they are unto men, oh, great One,
You, the unique Soul of all the worlds, where shall I attain?

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Notes

(i) In the preceding song, the Āḻvār would appear to have provoked the Lord into questioning him, how one, so ill-equipped as he, could think of attaining Him and on the top of that, doubt His greatness and bonafides. The Āḻvār's answer is that he is but the body and the Lord, the life within, whose bounden duty it is to take care of him. There was hardly any question of the body pursuing a path of its own, by way of practising austerity, discipline etc. Actually, it was He who did, from time to time, all that had to be done, by way of creating the worlds, sustaining them within His stomach during the deluge, refunding them later on to their former sistuations, rescuing the worlds from Mahā Bali, the usurper, by spanning them all, in just three strides, so on and so forth. And then, He lay on the ocean where came the Divine Mother through His churning; He also bunded the ocean to cross over to Laṇkā, to get at the Mother and later demolished the bund, so as to prevent the entry of the Rākṣasas into the mainland.

(ii) The humans could subsist on mere food and water while the Devās need 'Amrut' (ambrosia) for their subsistence. If this marks the distance between the mortals and the immortal Devas, well, there is not only that much distance but very much more between the Devas and the Supreme Lord, the 'Devādi Deva' and the comparison is thus not on all fours. While the ratio between Man and Deva is a definite quantum, that between the Deva and the Lord would baffle even the wildest imagination and cannot be put in finite terms.

eṅku vantu uṟukō, eṉṉai āḷvāṉē?—
ēḻ ulakaṅkaḷum nīyē;
aṅku avarkku amaitta tēyvamum nīyē;
avaṟṟu-avai karumamum nīyē;
poṅkiya puṟampāl poruḷ uḷavēlum,
avaiyumō nī iṉṉē āṉāl,
maṅkiya aṟivām nērppamum nīyē;
vāṉ puḷaṉ iṟantatum nīyē. (VIII–1–6)

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Translation

My Sovereign Lord, the worlds seven and the deities worshipped therein,
The rituals unto them performed as well as things in regions beyond,
All things and beings, subtle or manifest are unto You bound;
Well, such a one where and how do I attain?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār's query is how he can, on his own, attain the Lord Who is the Supreme Controller of all the worlds, Agni, Indra and other deities, worshipped by the respective votaries in different climes, the rituals performed, as part of such worship, as well as all things lying in the regions beyond. How can a lame man get on to the top of Mount Meru? The lameness denotes the incapacity to pursue the normal paths prescribed by the Scriptures to get at the Lord. But then, it behoves the Lord, as the Master, who has striven hard all the time for the Āḻvār's evolution, right up to this stage, to follow it up to the point of final fruition, with no ancillary effort on his part.

(ii) As already stated in V-2-8, it is the Supreme Lord Who has set up in different climes the minor deities to receive the homage the votaries pay them and grant them boons. This is reinforced here. The prescriptive rites and rituals offered to these deities actually reach the Supreme Lord Whose agents these deities are, rather His bodies through which He carries out His multifarious functions.

(iii) As mentioned in Śloka 17 of Śrī Āḷavandār's 'Stotra Ratna', the Lord's possessions (Vibhūti) are indeed very vast and immense, comprising, *inter alia*, the numerous Cosmic worlds with all their inner contents and the external multiplicity of layers, each of which is ten times bigger than the immediately preceding one. (yat daśottarāṇyāvaraṇāni yāni ca). The region beyond the seven worlds, alluded to in this song, denotes these external layers.

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iṟantatum nīyē; etirntatum nīyē;
nikaḻvatō nī; iṉṉē āṉāl,
ciṟanta niṉ taṉmai atu, itu, utu eṉṟu
aṟivu oṉṟum caṅkippaṉ viṉaiyēṉ—
kaṟanta pāl! neyyē! neyyiṉ iṉ cuvaiyē!
kaṭaliṉuḷ amutamē! amutil
piṟanta iṉ cuvaiyē! cuvaiyatu payaṉē!
piṉṉai tōḷ maṇanta pēr āyā! (VIII–1–7)

Translation

Sweet as milk fresh-drawn and the ghee that from it ensues,
You are, my Lord, the very sweetness in ghee, the ambrosia,
That from the ocean emerged, with its sweet contents,
The joy that from such sweetness results; the charming Piṉṉai
You did wed, oh, Gopal, the past, the future and the present
You do control; this sinner is losing faith in You, even then,
As the Lord Supreme of all things, near, far and in between.

Note

The Āḻvār says that the knowledge of the Lord being the Supreme Controller of all things and beings, abiding in all, which sustained him hitherto, is forsaking him now, the sinner that he is. Time, with its triple components of 'Past', 'Present' and 'Future' and all things and beings embraced within its folds, are but the Lord's modes. The Āḻvār could, therefore, discern the hand of the Lord, in all happenings, at all times. The Lord is the quintessence of all that is delicious, the inner core of sweetness. This sweetness gets heightened manifold, when the Lord is in conjunction with His Divine Consort. The Āḻvār can, therefore, hardly subsist without partaking of such unalloyed and unlimited bliss and yet, in his present state of separation from Him, he is even led to suspect whether all this glory, attributed to the Lord, is at all real or a mere figment of imagination. The doubt expressed by the Āḻvār earlier in this decad, was about the Lord's capacity to redeem His subjects. There at least, the Lord could escape by putting the blame on the supplicant's inadequacy, failings etc. But here, the Āḻvār is led to suspect even the basic feature of

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the Lord, as the all-pervading, inner Controller of all things and beings, said to be but His modes or attributes.

maṇanta pēr āyā! māyattāl muḻutum
valviṉaiyēṉai īrkiṉṟa
kuṇaṅkaḷai uṭaiyāy! acurar vaṉ kaiyar
kūṟṟamē! koṭiya puḷ uyarttāy!
paṇaṅkaḷ āyiramum uṭaiya pain nākap
paḷḷiyāy! pāṟkaṭal cērppā!
vaṇaṅkumāṟu aṟiyēṉ-maṉamum, vācakamum,
ceykaiyum, yāṉum nī-tāṉē. (VIII–1–8)

Translation

Mighty Gopāla, Piṉṉai, You did wed with love intense,
Your auspicious traits, in their full complement, tear into halve
This sinner great, deadly unto the mighty Asuras, You have
On Your banner Garuḍa, who does on them miseries impose,
In the Milk-ocean, on the thousand-hooded serpent You repose;
I and my mind, word and deed are all swayed by You,
And so, I know not how I can, on my own, worship You.

Notes

(i) The Aḻvār would appear to have been pulled up by the Lord as to why he did not even make a formal obeisance to Him. The Āḻvār clears up the position by pointing out that, as one who belongs to Him, lock, stock and barrel, and is wholly dominated by Him, even this formal act of bowing has to be ordained by Him.

(ii) The very traits of the Lord, which do sustain the devotees, are proving injurious to the Āḻvār in his present disconsolate state, making his separation from the Lord all the more poignant. The Āḻvār attributes this mental state to his sins. Wounds inflicted by missiles could be cured but not the sickness imposed by the Lord's traits themselves. The ungodly Asuras are destroyed by the Lord's weapons but His auspicious traits,

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strangely enough, torment the devout like Saint Nammāḻvār, as he puts it in this song, splitting him into halves, even as Hiraṇya was cleaved by Lord Narasimha.

(iii) Ādi-Śeṣa, the Lord's serpent-bed, can, on his spacious bosom, accommodate the Lord and His Consorts; his thousand hoods spread themselves out and dance with great joy because of his contact with the Lord.

(iv) Mind, body and speech of the sentient being are the Lord's gifts, capacitating the individual for worshipping Him and yet, the Āḻvār could not, on his own, bow unto the Lord, because he and his appendages, the mind etc., are all wholly dominated by Him. This is indeed the farthest limit of self-abnegation, totally objuring the element of self-effort, (Sādhana yogyatā), that is, employing 'Means' other than the Lord Himself.

yānum nī-tāṉē āvatō meyyē,
aru naraku-avaiyum nī; āṉāl,
vāṉ uyar iṉpam eytil eṉ? marṟai
narakamē eytil eṉ? eṉiṉum,
yāṉum nī-tāṉāyt teḻitoṟum, naṉṟum
añcuvaṉ narakam nāṉ aṭaitaḻ;
vāṉ uyar iṉpam maṉṉi vīṟṟiruntāy!—
aruḷu niṉ tāḷkaḷai eṉakkē. (VIII–1–9)

Translation

True it is, You are in me as You are in everything else,
The hell of a life I now eke out is also Yours;
So then, it matters not whether You grant me heavenly bliss
Or keep me lingering in this hellish life, full of distress.
And yet, life here I dread when I do my essential nature realise,
I beseech you, therefore, oh Lord, seated in the blissful heaven!
To bless me that I do your lovely feet attain.

Note

To those gifted with the vision of the Lord's Universal Form (Viśvarūpa), like Prahlāda and Nammāḻvār, it should indeed be possible to perceive the presence of the Lord everywhere,

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looking upon Hell and Heaven alike, with perfect mental equanimity. The doubt, therefore, arises why the Āḻvār abhors existence over here and aspires for his ascent to Heaven, exhibiting a distinct predilection for the latter. This song clears up the position in this regard. It is the corroding, rather, the corrupting influence of life in the midst of the worldlings with its potential risk of seriously interfering with his essential nature, as the exclusive vassal of the Lord solely dependent on Him, that scares the Āḻvār and frightens him to such an extent. No wonder, therefore that he longs for his quick ascent to Heaven where the Lord can be served and enjoyed in that transcendent setting, without break and fear of contamination of any sort.

tāḷkaḷai eṉakkē talaittalaic ciṟappat
tanta pēr utavik kaimmāṟāt
tōḷkaḷai ārat taḻuvi, eṉ uyirai
aṟa vilai ceytaṉaṉ-cōtī!
tōḷkaḷ āyirattāy! muṭikaḷ āyirattāy;
tuṇaimalark kaṇkaḷ āyirattāy!
tāḷkaḷ āyirattāy! pērkaḷ āyirattāy!
tamiyaṉēṉ periya appaṉē! (VIII–1–10)

Translation

With pleasure great, my Soul I have unto You, sold, sure and certain,
Oh, resplendent Lord, this is indeed in return
For the unflinching faith in Your feet, You have on me bestowed;
Shoulders many, crowns in plenty and a vast multitude
Of lotus eyes and feet many, I see in You, bearing names many,
My Sire, I know you intend showering on poor me favours many.

Notes

(i) Although the Lord has still not obliged the Āḻvār with His presence, the latter is jubilant that he has not been contaminated by the worldlings and the Lord's lovely feet are unto him what food and raiment are for the worldlings. This is indeed a great favour done to the

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Āḻvār by the great Lord, who has not only made the Āḻvār abhor and abjure the ways of the world but also look upon the Lord as his Sole Sustainer. What is even more, He has chosen the Āḻvār for singing these hymns of 'Tiruvāymoḷi' without giving this special assignment even to sages of the eminence of Vālmīki, Vyāsa and Parāśara or the first three Āḻvārs, a piece of special favour, a great felicity, already acknowledged by the Āḻvār in the earlier decad. For this benefaction, the Āḻvār now seeks to recompense the Lord by offering Him his soul, like unto a father putting his arms round the shoulders of his daughter and giving her away in marriage to the bridgeroom. In the exuberance of his joy, the Āḻvār seems to have coolly overlooked past history in this regard, his own earlier attempt to barter away his soul, thwarted by an almost immediate realisation that he was trying to give away the Lord's own, under the erroneous belief that it was his own. Well, even as recently as in the eighth stanza of this very decad, the Āḻvār was conscious of the fact that he, his mind, word, and deed were all swayed by Him and that he had nothing to do with these.

(ii) Even as the Āḻvār delightfully made a confounded gift of a thing that didn't belong to him, the Lord received it with great jubilation, as if it did not already belong to Him, beamed with joy and expanded marvellously by way of expressing His great joy, exhibiting thousands of shoulders, crowns, eyes, feet etc. This is on a par with the Kṣatṛya Kings, in exultation over a great turn of events in their lives, sharing their joy with their favourite queens, in amorous company.

periya appaṉai, piramaṉ appaṉai,
uruttiraṉ appaṉai, muṉivarkku
uriya appaṉai, amarar appaṉai,
ulakukku ōr taṉi appaṉ-taṉṉai
periya vaṇ kurukūr vaṇ caṭakōpaṉ
pēṇiṉa āyirattuḷḷum
uriya col-mālai ivaiyum pattu ivaṟṟāl
uyyalām, toṇṭīr!—naṅkaṭkē. (VIII–1–11)

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Translation

Ye, devotees, salvation we can all attain, reciting these songs ten,
Out of the choice thousand composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Adoring the peerless Lord of the Universe, of unique grandeur,
The great Sire of Piramaṉ, Uruthiraṉ and the worthy Master
Of illustrious sages like Sanaka and the Devas, one and all.

Note

This end-song epitomises the contents of this decad and avers that those who recite this decad will attain salvation, even though they have been immersed for ages in sensual pleasures, straying away from God-head.

(Piramaṉ=Brahmā; Uruttiraṉ=Rudra)

Eighth Centum—Second decad (VIII-2)
(Naṅkaḷ varivaḷai)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḻvār began to suspect that, with his coming into the world, the Lord's reputation as the repository of many an auspicious trait and the grand ordainer of all things, was becoming extinct. The Āḻvār was, however, brought back to normal thinking by the Lord and the Āḻvār's misgivings were cleared up in a way. But then, the external perception of the Lord's exquisite Form and physical contact, longed for by the Saint, did not, as yet, materialise. This, therefore, gave rise to yet another doubt in the mind of the Āḻvār whether the Lord was keeping away from him on the ground that he was still not quite free from worldly desires. No doubt, the Āḻvār kept himself studiously aloof from the world and its meretritious charms, as far as he could be conscious of it. And yet, the Omni-Scient Lord might have found traces of worldly desires still lurking inside the Āḻvār unknown to him, and this was perhaps the reason why the Lord was holding back. The Āḻvār, therefore, thought of clearing up even this inkling of a doubt and vindicating his absolute detachment from the world and its affairs, but did not open up a direct dialogue with the Lord. Instead, he resorted to the device of informing the Lord and impressing upon

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Him through argumentation between the Nāyakī and her mates and elders, the theme of the dialogue being as follows:

The Nāyakī (Āḻvār) who got separated from the Supreme Lord after her erstwhile union with Him cannot contain herself and patiently await His return. She, therefore,darts forth, in an attempt to meet her Lord in His dwelling place in the yonder region but gets pulled up by her mates for transgression of the norms of feminine conduct and the restraint of modesty which it imposes. The mates counsel patience but it falls on deaf ears. The Nāyakī sternly declines to conform to the so-called norms of the worldlings, being on a pedestal of her own, totally dissociating herself from all things ungodly and fierecely concentrating on her Lord, with no other thought, crossing her mind.

Against this background, the key stanzas of this decad are the seventh, eighth and the eleventh.

naṅkaḷ varivaḷai āyaṅkāḷō!
nammuṭai ētalar muṉpu nāṇi,
nuṅkaṭku yāṉ oṉṟu u-aikkum māṟṟam
nōkkukiṉṟēṉ; eṅkum kāṇa māṭṭēṉ;
caṅkam carintaṉa, cāy iḻantēṉ;
taṭa mulai poṉ niṟamāyt taḷarntēṉ-
veṅkaṇ paṟavaiyiṉ pākaṉ eṅkōṉ
vēṅkaṭavāṇaṉai vēṇṭic ceṉṟē. (VIII–2–1)

Translation

Ye, my mates, bedecked with bangles nice,
I wish I could in you confide and freely tell
What unto hostile elders I feel shy to disclose,
And yet, words I find not, my thoughts to spell;
My Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam Who conducts the bird
With hot eyes, I desired to see and lo! lose I did
My complexion fine, down the wrists my bangles slid,
With the colour off my breasts, I just became jaded.

Notes

(i) Finding the Nāyakī off colour and debilitated, her mates enquired of her what was going wrong with her. The Nāyakī felt shy to disclose her love-sickness but her

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friendly mates could put her at ease. Even then, words failed her and, at long last, she gave out the genesis of her malady, as above.

(ii) The bangles would not rest on the wrists of the Nāyakī, grown gaunt and emaciated, while the mates had their bangles, *in tact*. Even as Lakṣmaṇa, whose grief over Sītā's abduction, stemming from a stinging sense of unwariness on his part, was even greater than Śrī Rāma's, steadied himself so as to be fit to serve Śrī Rāma all right, the mates here had to keep themselves fit, in order to bring the Nāyakī round, instead of lamenting along with her.

(iii) The elders have absolute faith in the Lord's grace, which is bound to lead them on to the final goal without fail. They would, therefore, counsel the Nāyakī to coolly await the descent of the Lord's grace at His sweet will, without getting jittery. This kind of advice is, however, unpalatable to the Nāyakī, who is all agog for the quick consummation of her inordinate God-love and hence, the elders are deemed by her to be hostile. And now, hostility is of two kinds, the inner and the outer, as brought out in aphorism 139 of 'Acārya Hrudayam'. Those, who employ 'means' other than the Lord Himself to attain Him, are regarded as the external enemies while those who look upon God as the 'Ready Means', the 'Siddhopāya', and yet remain opposed to getting into a state of flutter and throbbing for quick consummation, on the ground that it militates against the creed of 'Pāratantrya' (exclusive dependence on the Lord), are categorised by the Nāyakī as the internal enemies.

(iv) *Garuḍa, the hot-eyed bird*:

Garuḍa, being hot-eyed, is, at times, favourable, and unfavourable at other times, depending upon the particular mood of the God-lover. This mighty bird could quell the ungodly with blistering looks and fly the Lord unerringly down to where the Nāyakī is eagerly awaiting

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His arrival. The Nāyakī would then thank Garuḍa for his good offices. The same Nāyakī would, however, speak disparagingly of the bird, when he takes away the Lord from her and leaves her sadly alone, as in her present state of 'Viśleṣa' (separation). This is just like the Gopis (the damsels of Virundâvan) dubbing the saintly Akrūra as the one with a cruel heart, who separated them from Kṛṣṇa and took Him to Kamsa's citadel (Mathurā)—'Akrūraḥ Krūrahrudayaḥ'.

(v) The Lord has some down all the way from Heaven to Mount Tiruvēṅkatam, to be beheld by us all. He has not come to the Nāyakī and so, she thought of going up to this holy centre, specially courted by Him. But these are the changes instantly wrought in her—the sliding down of the bangles, loss of complexion and all that.

vēṇṭic ceṉṟu oṉṟu peṟukiṟpāril
eṉṉuṭait tōḻiyar nuṅkaṭkēlum,
īṇṭu itu uraikkum paṭiyai, antō!
kāṇkiṉṟilēṉ-iṭarāṭṭiyēṉ nāṉ;
kāṇ taku tāmaraik kaṇṇaṉ kaḷvaṉ,
viṇṇavar-kōṉ, naṅkaḷ kōṉaik kaṇṭāl,
īṇṭiya caṅkum niṟaivum koḷvāṉ
ettaṉai kālam iḷaikkiṉṟēṉē! (VIII–2–2)

Translation

Alas! I know not, in my present state of woe,
What to say of me even unto You, my mates dear!
Who would from me always get whatever you desire;
Were I to see the lotus-eyed Lord, bewitching to behold,
Who by His looks could our hearts steal, the Sovereign Lord
Of the Celestials and us alike, I can unto me get restored
My bangles and modesty and for this I am since long trying hard.

Note

Ever since the Lord withdrew Himself from the Nāyakī's vision, she has been without her bangles which slid

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down her wrists, and the innate sense of modesty, characteristic of women under restraint. It is only when she gets the vision back again, she can hope to get back her lost possessions. It is a pity, she is still in a state of longing, with fulfilment nowhere in sight.

kalam iḷaikkil allāl, viṉaiyēṉ
nāṉ iḷaikkiṉṟilaṉ; kaṇṭukoḷmiṉ;
ñālam aṟiyap paḷi cumantēṉ,
nal-nutalīr! iṉi nāṉit tāṉ eṉ—
nīla malar neṭum cōti cūḻnta
niṇṭa mukil vaṇṇaṉ, kaṇṇaṉ koṇṭa
kōla vaḷaiyoṭu māmai koḷvāṉ,
ettaṉai kālamum kūṭac ceṉṟē? (VIII–2–3)

Translation

I am in endless pursuit of Kaṇṇaṉ, my cloud-hued Lord,
Of limitless blue, beaming far and wide, to get unto me restored,
My bangles lovely and complexion fair; Indeed, the whole world
Blames me for transgression of my bounds, Ye, mates with foreheads bright.
There's no use my fighting shy anymore, please note;
This sinner will persevere and me Time can never beat.

Note

Apart from the crowning trait of modesty for women, as a class, the 'Prapanna', who pursues the path of loving surrender to the Lord's voluntary grace, has to await the descent of such grace at the time deemed appropriate by the Lord, with absolute faith in Him, a robust confidence. It is this very plank, the mates also stand upon and so, they try to bring round the Nāyāki. But the Nāyakī says, she has become brazen, after all the notoriety and opprobrium she has earned by dint of her sending the birds and bees as emissaries (I-4) and her attempt to come into the open and arraign the Lord for His cruel unresponsiveness (V-3). She is determined to try till the end of time and get back her bangles, the external possession, and modesty, the internal

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decoration, stolen away from her by the Lord of exquisite charm. This is, as it were, a challenge to the mates who advised the Nāyakī to give up her futile pursuit, right now, instead of acknowledging defeat at a later date, after a long and strenuous struggle.

kūṭac ceṉṟēṉ-iṉi eṉ koṭukkēṉ?
kōlvaḷai, neñcat toṭakkam ellām
pātu aṟṟu oḻiya iḷantu, vaikal
palvaḷaiyārmuṉ paricu aḻintēṉ—
māṭak koṭi mātiḷ teṉ kuḷantai
vaṉ kuṭapāl niṉṟa māyak kūttaṉ
âṭal paṟavai uyartta vel pōr
āḻivalavaṉai ātarittē. (VIII–2–4)

Translation

Court did I Lord Māyakkūttaṉ, borne aloft by the gay bird,
Enshrined in the western part of Teṉkuḷantai with castles tall
And stately walls, Who the victorious disc does wield,
And lost my bangles lovely, my mind, one and all;
Indeed I have nothing more to lose, having lost, long back,
My feminine bearing, in the eyes of the women wearing bangles, in bulk.

Notes

(i) This song brings out the Āḻvār's adoration of Māyakkūttaṉ, the Deity enshrined in Tenkuḷantai, popularly known as Peruṅkuḷam, near Āḻvār Tirunakari (Kurukūr), the birthplace of the Saint.

(ii) *Māyakkūttaṉ*: This could either refer to Lord Kṛṣṇa's vast array of wondrous deeds, performed during the brief span of His advent over here, right in the middle of the rituals performed by the Celestials in the yonder Heaven, as part of their diurnal worship of the Lord in His transcendent Form.

or

Generally, the Lord who binds us to this body, like unto a bird's nest and watches all the fun and frolic that follow.

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(iii) Garuḍa flutters its wings with hilarious joy, in contemplation of the prospective outing of the Lord mounted on him.

(iv) When the mates chide the Nāyakī that, by her daring she stood to lose all her possessions, one by one, she replies that there is nothing more to lose, having already lost her all.

āḻivalavaṇai ātarippum,
āṅku avaṉ nammil varavum ellām,
tōḻiyarkāḷ! nam uṭaiyamētān?
colluvatō iṅku ariyatutāṉ—
ūḻitōṟu ūḻi, oruvaṉāka
naṉku uṇarvārkkum uṇaralākāc
cūḻal uṭaiya cuṭark koḷ ātit
tollai am cōti niṉaikkuṅkālē? (VIII–2–5)

Translation

Ye, mates, it would hardly be proper to say things harsh

About the Lord wielding the discus, the Primate of brilliance everlasting,
Of ultra-mundane origin, of wondrous deeds which the devotees enthral,
Whose glory even the most knowledgeable can't fathom and comprehend,
However much and however long they might try to find;
'Tis nothing new for devotees to covet Him and for Him to respond.

Notes

(i) Trying to convict the Nāyakī out of her own mouth, the mates advise her not to court the Lord and lose all her possessions in the process, as owned by her in the immediately preceding song. Pat comes the admonition from the Nāyakī, warning them against any possible misunderstanding of the Lord's glory and greatness and dubbing Him as callous, hard-hearted and so on. It was not as if she was the only God-lover, subject to

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such fluctuations. There have been very many God-lovers before, who did covet the Lord's presence and craved, like Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, for incessant communion with Him and the Lord also graciously responded and mingled with the devout very freely, exhibiting many wonderful traits and deeds.

(ii) The statement that intellectual stalwarts too cannot comprehend the Lord, even if they should engage themselves in such pursuit for ages, might seem to come into conflict with the texts, such as, 'Vedāhametaṁ Puruṣaṁ Mahāntaṁ', 'Aham vedmi Mahātmānaṁ' etc., which claim to know God. The authority to whom these texts apply is what is called the Brahma-Jñāni or 'Tattva vith', the knower of Brahman, the ultimate Principle or Truth. Well, all that these eminent persons could know is that the Lord cannot be fully comprehended and His ways are inscrutable. For example, the Lord Himself has declared many a time that He would act only when Mahālakṣmī plays the recommendatory role, mediating and pleading for the supplicants at the door-step. And yet, He would also say, 'Nāsou Puruṣakāreṇa nacāpyanyena hetunā, Kevalaṁ svecchāyaivāhaṁ prekṣa kancit Kathācana', that is, He could not be coaxed into redeeming His subjects by any means including the mediation of the Divine Mother and that His own will was paramount, in the matter of extending His grace. Again, He has declared, in unambiguous terms His severe displeasure in regard to the transgression of the dictates of the Scriptures, which are but His commands—'Śrutis Śmrutir Mamaivajña yasth āmullangya vartate, āgnāccheti Mama dhrohi Madbhaktopi na vaiṣnavaḥ'. And yet, in Chapter IX-30 of Bhagavad Gita, this stern warning would seem to have got totally diluted, when Lord Kṛṣṇa averred, "apicet sudurācāraḥ bhajate Mām ananya bhāk, Sādhureva samantavyaḥ Samyagvyavasito hi saḥ", that is, "Even he, who has committed grave breaches of the codes of conduct, appropriate to the different stations in life, deserves to be placed on a par

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with a Saint and honoured likewise, if he meditates on Me, with selffess devotion, with no other end in view." Did not Lord Rāma wind up the heated debate on Vibhīṣaṇa's admission into His camp, by announcing His great creed of granting asylum to any one, who sought refuge in Him and responding, without fail, to the call of a destitute, be he friendly or a foe in the guise of a friend, and whatever be the magnitude of his sins? How then can anyone, however exalted and sagacious, claim to have known fully, the Lord and His ways? The only exception could, of course, be the chosen few unto whom the Lord has revealed Himself, *in toto*, and imparted crystal-clear knowledge, shorn of all doubts, discrepancies and deviations.

(iii) The Nāyakī's hopes are kept alive because the Great One, Who baffles scrutiny and defies description, is also known to be amazingly simple, mixing freely with His ardent devotees. How then can the mates dissuade the Nāyakī from pinning her faith in His condescending love?

tollai am cōti niṉaikkuṁkāl, eṉ
col aḻavu aṉṟu; imaiyōr-tamakkum
ellai ilātaṉa kūḻppuc ceyyum;
at tiṟam niṟka-em māmai koṇṭāṉ;
alli malart taṇ tuḻāyum tārāṉ-
ārkku iṭukō iṉip pūcal? collīr!—
valli vaḻa vayal cūḻ kuṭantai
mā malarkkaṇ vaḻarkiṉṟa mālē. (VIII–2–6)

Translation

Tell me, my mates, to whom else I shall my woes depose,
When the resplendent Lord of prowess extra-ordinary, much beyond the grasp
Of even Celestials, the Great one of amazing grandeur, Who does repose
In Tirukkuṭantai amid nice gardens and fields fertile, who did grab
My complexion fair but wouldn't favour me with tuḻaci garland, full of fragrance.

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Notes

(i) The mates would appear to have been prodding the Nāyakī, saying that the Lord is indeed dear to attain and not the easily accessible one, as she was making out. The Nāyakī, however, effectivey silences them by pointing out that it matters not whether He is near or far, seeing that He has kept her mind solely fixed on Him. And, in this state of mind, the Nāyakī sees no other way but to be a supplicant at His door-step, instead of hanging on to those with whom she has nothing to do. As a matter of fact, it would not be possible even to the exalted Celestials like Brahmā and Rudra to define the Lord's stance with any degree of certainty. He, who is beyond reach some times, is the most easily attainable at other times, and the doubt, therefore, assails the minds of one and all, high and low, as to what the Lord would be like, at any one time. In the 'Mokśa Dharma' of Mahābhārata, Brahmā said unto Rudra, that none, including them, could fathom the infinite Mind of the Lord and plumb its mysterious depths.

(ii) Such a Great one condescended to reveal His exquisite Form unto the Nāyakī and steal away her heart, as evidenced by the discoloration that has set in. During those moments of His union with the Nayaki, He was totally subservient to her but now that He keeps aloof of her, He would not care to give her even the tuḷaci garland worn on His person, which could, to some extent, alleviate her suffering. Even so, it behoves her to wait at His door-step only, whatever be His dispensation, good, bad or indifferent, because of the inalienable link between the two.

māl, ari, kēcavaṉ, nāraṇaṉ, cīmātavaṉ,
kōvintaṉ, vaikuntaṉ eṉṟu eṉṟu
ōlamiṭa eṉṉaip paṉṉi, viṭṭiṭṭu,
oṉṟum uruvum cuvaṭum kāṭṭāṉ;
ēla malarkkuḻal aṉṉaimīrkāḷ!
eṉṉuṭait tōḻiyarkāḷ! eṉ ceykēṉ?
kālam pala ceṉṟum kāṉpatu-āṉai;
uṅkaḷōṭu eṅkaḷ iṭai illaiyē. (VIII–2–7)

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Translation

Ye, elders, with fragrant locks, flower-bedecked, Ye, my mates,
His names, my Lord has made me cry out,
As Māl, Ari, Kēcavaṉ, Nāraṇaṉ, Cīmātavaṉ, Kōvintaṉ,
Vaikuṇṭaṉ, and so on,
But of Him no trace could I see; what shall be done?
Till the end of time, struggle shall I, on and on
And see Him, sure and certain, let me swear,
There's indeed no link 'tween you and me I am sure.

Notes

(i) Even when the Lord keeps aloof, the subject cannot help pining for Him and uttering His sweet names, expressive of His auspicious attributes and wondrous deeds, as the sole means of subsistence. That is why Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī resent the advice tendered by her mates, not to attempt the unattainable but stay quiet. She would rather cut away from her kith and kin who can't see eye to eye with her. (See the concluding para of the preamble to this decad) The Lord (Tirumāl) known to possess boundless love for His devotees, cannot keep away from them for long; He is Ari (Hari) the destroyer of all our sins which impede our union with Him; He is Keśava, whose dark, curly locks entrance the devotees and He should be fully aware that the Nāyakī would be musing over this sheer beauty, all the time; and then, He is Nārāyaṇā, of tender solicitude for the devotees, 'Aśṛtavatsala' and also 'Mādhava' (Cirīmātavaṉ) Who, by reason of His conjunction with the Divine Mother (Śrī), would never give up the devotees; He is Kōvintaṉ (Govinda) Who subserves those that take refuge in Him and all these qualities only go to embellish His transcendent glory as 'Vaikuntaṉ' residing in that super-eminent abode, known as Heaven.

(ii) Although the Nāyakī called out the Lord's names lustily, yet, He was nowhere in sight. When Bharata went to the forest to meet Śrī Rāma, the former could locate the latter's residence with the aid of the smoke that shot up in the sky from the ritual-fire. But, in the Nāyakī's

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case, currently there is no trace whatever of the Lord nor any clue regarding His whereabouts.

iṭai illai-yāṉ vaḷartta kiḷikāḷ!
pūvaikaḷkāḷ! kuyilkāḷ! mayilkāḷ!-
uṭaiya nam māmaiyum, caṅkum, neñcum,
oṉṟum oḻiya oṭṭātu koṇṭāṉ;
aṭaiyum vaikuntamum, pāṟkaṭalum,
añcaṉa veṟpum avai naṇiya;
kaṭaiyaṟap pācaṅkaḷ viṭṭapiṉṉai
aṉṟi, avaṉ avai kāṇkoṭāṉē. (VIII–2–8)

Translation

Ye, parrots, peacocks, Koels, little Pūvai birds, my pets all,
There's nothing more you can from me have, my possessions, one and all,
The Lord has from me snatched 'tis, however, not difficult to attain hence
Vaikuntam, Milk-ocean, Mount Añcaṉam and other holy centres,
But these the Lord reveals not unless one sheds the last shred
Of attachment unto things in the domain outside.

Notes

(i) The main theme of this decad being complete eschewal of, and total dissociation from all things ungodly, this is yet another topical stanza of the decad. (See also stanza 7)

(ii) The pets were reared up by the Nāyakī merely as ancillary to her God-enjoyment, by way of heightening the enjoyment and now, in her present state of separation from her beloved Lord, all these birds are of no avail and the Nāyakī doesn't hesitate to sever her connection with these unwanted pets, in the same way as she stands apart from her mates and the elders who tempt her the wrong way. A doubt might, however, arise, at this stage, how these birds, which are said to denote the great preceptors (Ācāryās), as elucidated earlier, could at all be discarded notwithstanding their exalted position

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as the sure Guides to Heaven. As a matter of fact, in Saint Rāmānuja's swan-song, 'Śaraṇāgati gadya', he specifically includes even the preceptors in the category of persons, dear and near, excluded by him, 'Gurūn santyajya'. The idea behind this is that one's parents, wife, sons, relations, friends and preceptor, loved and adored, as belonging to the Lord, have also to be eschewed, if they turned out to be inimical to God-enjoyment. Vide also aphorism 153 of 'Ācārya Hrudayam'.

(iii) The Lord having forsaken the Nāyakī after His erstwhile union with her, He has simultaneously deprived her of her fair complexion, bangles, mind and all, which He has taken with Him to the yonder Heaven, thinking that it is much beyond the Nāyakī's reach. But the Nāyakī is well aware that the Heaven is not that remote and unattainable, being, as a matter of fact, the destined Land, the ultimate destination of every one, which the Super-sensitive Lord shall, however, make available only when the earthly desires and sensual pleasures are given up in toto and one loves Him exclusively. Mount Añcaṇam, mentioned in this song, is Mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam. This holy centre and the Milk-ocean are held on a par with Heaven.

kāṇkoṭuppāṇ allaṇ ārkkum taṇṇai;
kaicey appālatu ōr māyam-taṇṇāl
māṇ kuṟaḷ kōla vaṭivu kāṭṭi,
maṇṇum viṇṇum niṟaiya malarnta
cēṇ cuṭart tōḷkaḷ pala taḷaitta
tēvā-pirāṟku eṉ niṟaiviṇōṭu
nāṇ koṭuttēṉ:iṉi eṉ koṭukkēṉ?—
eṉṉuṭai nal-nutal naṅkaimīrkāḷ? (VIII–2–9)

Translation

My mates with foreheads bright, I have to lose nothing more,
Having my feminity lost and with that, my sense of modesty

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Unto the Lord of the Celestials, with shoulders many, bright and hefty,
Who the most exalted eludes and remains unseen but did appear before (Bali), as the unique Vāmana, charming beyond compare,
And did from him snatch, on the sly, all the worlds,
Earth, Svarga and all, which He did span and pervade.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī averred in the preceding song that the Lord would certainly grant admission to His transcendent abode, if we unreservedly gave up attachment to all things ungodly. She was hit back by the mates, who said that all that the Nāyakī could do was to sever her connections with them and go on losing all her possessions, one by one, but she would never gain the Lord, she longed for, at such great cost. And now, the Nāyakī says that she has nothing more to lose, having already lost her feminine bearing itself, along with modesty, its essential ingredient. She has thus lost both her priceless kingdoms, whereas the Lord restored to Indra, his lost kingdom, getting it back from Mahābali. The Nāyakī and Bali sail in the same boat, both having lost their respective kingdoms, enthralled by the Lord's exquisite charm. Even so, Bali won everlasting fame as a great donor.

(ii) The Lord would not reveal Himself to those, who seek to gain His presence, by dint of their own efforts, however exalted they might be. So far as the Nāyakī is concerned, she has been enthralled by His bewitching beauty, which He revealed unto her and, in the process, He has stolen away her heart and all, even as He appeared before Mahābali, as the exquisite Vāmana and snatched away all his possessions. The shoulders and the entire frame of the Lord's person went on expanding

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the moment Bali poured water into His right palm, betokening his gift unto the Lord of what was sought of him.

eṉṉuṭai nal-nutal naṅkaimīrkāḷ!
yāṉ īṉic ceyvatu eṉ-eṉ nēñcu eṉṉai
niṉ iṭaiyēṉ allēṉ eṉṟu nīṅki,
nēmiyum caṅkum irukaik koṇṭu,
pal neṭum cūḷ cuṭar ñāyiṟṟōṭu
pāl mati ēnti, ōr kōla nīla
nal neṭum kuṉṟam varuvatu oppāṉ
naḷ-malarp pātam aṭaintatuvē? (VIII–2–10)

Translation

My mates with foreheads bright, me my mind has forsaken
And attained the lovely feet, like unto lotus in fresh bloom,
Of the Lord, Who does the conch and discus wield and gleam
Like a lovely blue mountain, tall and mobile, bearing on its crown
The effulgent Sun with multiple rays besides the silvery moon;
What then can I do, thus dispossessed of my mind?

Notes

(i) The elders coaxed the Nāyakī, saying that they are the persons really interested in her well-being and she was, therefore, bound to listen to their advice. But the Nāyakī felt helpless, having become totally unreceptive and impervious to advice of any kind, in the absence of her mind, which has already crossed over to the Lord and taken shelter at His lovely feet, much beyond her reach, at the moment.

(ii) The hefty Lord of bluish tint is like unto a gigantic blue emerald mountain, tall and lovely; His holding the radiant discus and the white conch looks like the Sun and the Moon rising on the crest of a blue mountain simultaneously, a phenomenon which can hardly be noticed, except in the person of the Lord and is thus as unique as the Lord Himself.

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pātam aṭaivataṉ pācattālē maṟṟavaṉ
pācaṅkaḷ muṟṟa viṭṭu,
kōtu il pukaḻk kaṇṇaṉ-tan aṭimēl
vaṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
tītu il antāti ōr āyirattuḷ
ivaiyum ōr pattu icaiyoṭum vallār
ātum ōr tītu ilar āki, iṅkum
aṅkum ellām amaivārkaḷ tāmē. (VIII–2–11)

Translation

Those that sing tunefully these ten songs unique,
Out of the flawless thousand, graciously, composed by Caṭa-kōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, who to attain Lord Kaṅṅaṉ's feet was very keen
And adored His glory immaculate, shedding all desires, alien
To the cherished goal, will from blemishes of all kinds be absolved
And enjoy the best of all good things, here and abroad.

Notes

(i) The end-stanza gives out the benefit accruing from the tuneful chanting of this decad, namely, God-enjoyment, both here and in the yonder Heaven, *completely purged of all grossness and worldly desires*. The portion underlined is the key-note of this decad. As a matter of fact, these chanters will gain unique prominence, both in this world and the yonder heaven.

(ii) By the immaculate glory of the Lord is meant that, by meditating upon which one cannot entertain any other desire. Should the two, however, go hand-in-hand, it shall indeed be a reflection on the self-sufficiency of the Lord's glory for one's exclusive enjoyment and will thus constitute a blemish. The flawlessness of this hymnal of Nammāḻvār and its exclusive excellence, rather incomparable excellence, have already been brought out at the appropriate places, and do not, therefore, need repetition.

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Eighth Centum—Third Decad (VIII-3)
(Aṅkum iṅkum)

Preamble

It was indeed a grand poetic imagery of the Āḻvār, conjuring up the vision of the Lord, as an emerald mountain, tall and lovely, moving along, bearing on its crest the radiant Sun and the silvery Moon, all at once vide VIII-2-10. The Āḻvār could not lift his mind off this spectacular grandeur and, at the same time, this made him apprehensive of the safety of the Lord, so charming, who in this exquisite Form, moves about alone and unattended in this wicked world peopled by the ungodly and the selfish. The Āḻvār, felt vexed that there was none else to share his anxiety in this regard. While the Celestials in Heaven are soaked in 'Brahmānubhava', drinking deep of that perennial nectarean spring, namely, the Lord in that glorious transcendent setting, the worldlings are engrossed with sensual pleasures, Brahmā and other Devas would not hesitate to secure their selfish ends involving the Lord in battling against the ungodly Asurās and making Him the target of the arrows of the hostile hordes. When the Saint voiced forth his fear, as above, the Lord set him at ease, by pointing out that there was hardly any room for such fears, surrounded as He always is by the 'Nityās', 'Muktās' and the devout seekers of salvation. The Āḻvār then regains his composure, rid of his erstwhile fears. The initial disquietitude is reflected in the third song of this decad and its clearance is revealed in the tenth song.

aṅkum iṅkum, vāṉavar tāṉavar, yāvarum,
eṅkum iṉaiyai eṉṟu uṉṉai ariyakilātu, alaṟṟi,
aṅkam cērum-pūmakaḷ, maṇmakaḷ, āymakaḷ-
caṅku cakkarak kaiyavaṉ eṉpar caraṇamē. (VIII–3–1)

Translation

The Vāṉavar, Tāṉavar and all else, here, there and everywhere,
Can hardly comprehend You but reckon You, in their own way,
Merely as their Saviour, in times of need,
The one, who the conch and discus wields
And does on His person the triple Consorts Divine hold.

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Notes

The highest love to God is love rendered for God's sake, love culminating in benediction or glorification of God. Love, so disinterestedly rendered, is love of purity and virginity and, under its influence, what is uppermost in the mind of the devotee is the Lord's remarkable tenderness (Saukumārya) and bewitching beauty and he grows apprehensive of the Lord's safety and seeks His well-being. This is what the Āḻvār would expect of every votary of the Lord but, on a close scrutiny, he was shocked to find the votaries in all ranks, the Devas known to be friendly to God, the Asuras, inimical to the Devas and the humans falling under numerous categories, one and all of them, praying to the Lord only for making good all their deficiencies and bestowing on them the felicity they lack. None of them is found to bear any love to God for God's sake, in the manner indicated at the outset. The glorious setting in which the Divine consorts are borne on the Lord's winsome chest and the manner in which the white conch and the radiant discus are gracefully held in His hands should make the true God-lover enjoy them all and become, in turn, apprehensive of the Lord's safety, ever alert to the possible danger to the Lord's person, with a view to averting it. But these self-seekers look upon this very setting as conducive to their own well-being, to bestow choice gifts on them through the mediation of the Goddesses and protect them, with the discus and other weapons, whenever they are in trouble: The Āḻvār just abhors all such selfish persons seeking transient riches and expresses his abhorrence in this song, couched as an address to the Lord Himself.

caraṇam ākiya nāṉmaṟai nūlkaḷum cārātē,
maraṇam, tōṟṟam, vāṉ piṇi, mūppu eṉṟu ivai māyttōm-
karaṇap pal paṭai paṟṟu aṟa ōṭum kaṇal āḻi
araṇat tiṇ paṭai ēntiya īcaṟku aḷāēy. (VIII–3–2)

Translation

Alas! even those, who abjure the path the Vedas four prescribe
For acquiring riches, have their final goal circumscribed
By mere freedom from birth and death, pestilence and old age

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And do not get themselves in service engaged
Of the Lord who the grand galaxy of protective weapons wields.

Note

In the preceding song, the Saint condemned those who hanker after the transient riches, instead of getting soley absorbed in God-love. And now, he speaks disparagingly of the 'Kevalas', those whose final goal is limited to mere emancipation from the terrific cycle of birth and death and remaining thereafter in disembodied state, lost for ever in that stupid self-enjoyment, thereby denying themselves the supreme bliss of serving the Lord in Heaven in that glorious setting. It is a great pity, these persons are not alive to their essential nature (Svarūpa), as the exclusive vassals of the Lord, bound to serve Him exclusively. And so, the Āḻvār can hardly muster strenth for the service of the Lord either from the ranks of the seekers of the so-called 'riches' or those of the 'Kevalas'.

āḻum āḻār; āḻiyum caṅkum cumappār tām;
vāḻum villum koṇṭu piṉ celvār maṟṟu illai;
tāḻum tōḷum kaikaḷai ārat toḻak kāṇēṉ;
nāḻum nāḻum nāṭuvaṉ aṭiyēṉ-ñālatte. (VIII–3–3)

Translation

Alas! there's none to attend on my Lord,
The conch and discus He Himself bears,
I see none following Him, carrying His bow and sword;
There's none to admire His lovely feet and sinewy shoulders
And worship Him to heart's fill and so, I do fear
His safety in this wicked world and Him I wish to follow.

Notes

(i) In the last two songs, the Āḻvār deplored his own loneliness, there being none to join him in whole-hearted and self-less service of the Lord. And now, he feels for the Lord's loneliness, there being no camp-follower to carry His weapons and attend on Him, with utter devotion, swayed by His exquisite charm.

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(ii) The Āḻvār feels agitated, seeing that the Supreme Lord of the entire universe has not employed any one to attend on Him; deeply touched by His tenderness (saukumārya), the Āḻvār feels that the conch and discus might impose a great burden on Him and that He should, therefore, employ some one to carry them. Well, even if, as some would put it, the conch and the discus are the Lord's insignia and have to be necessarily borne by Him, why should not some one be pressed into service for carrying His sword and bow? As a matter of fact, during His incarnation as Śrī Rāma, there was Lakṣmaṇa to carry the bow and arrows and serve Him in every conceivable manner. But now, in His Iconic Form, ther is no such attendant and this depresses the Āḻvār, a great deal.

(iii) The Lord's majestic gait and His imposing shoulders are indeed so charming that one can't but pray that nothing untoward happened and marred the beauty, *par excellence*. And yet, the Āḻvār finds none in this wicked world, attracted to the Lord in this manner. That is why his fears are aggravated and this is particularly relevant in the context of the Lord's iconic manifestation in this notorious world of miscreants like Rāvaṇa, Kamsa and Duryodhana, each with his own machinations for harming the Lord during His avatāras as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.

ñālam pōṉakam paṟṟi ōr muṟṟā uru āki,
ālam pēr ilai aṉṉavacamceyyum ammāṉē!
kālam pērvatu ōr kār iruḷ ūḻi ottu uḻatāl-uṉ
kōlam kār eḻil kāṇaluṟṟu, āḻum koṭiyēṟkē. (VIII–3–4)

Translation

Oh, Sire, as a tender babe, You did on a fig-leaf repose,
Bearing in Your stomach the entire Universe;
Feast I would on Your Form exquisite like unto a rain-cloud,
And when this Sinner is from it precluded,
A split-second seems an age like unto the longish night.

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Note

The Lord allays the fears of the Āḻvār by pointing out to him, His role as the Protector of the whole Universe and reminding him of how He sustained all the worlds with their numerous contents, right inside His stomach, during the deluge. Instead of allaying the Āḻvār's fears, this episode only stirred up his thoughts in yet another direction, like unto a doting mother. On a vast expanse of water floats a tender fig-leaf on which reposes a tender babe and this babe holds in its stomach all the seven worlds with their massive contents. How incongruous and hence how frightful, the whole setting is! The Āḻvār can think of this babe only in terms of the turbulent One that slept in Yaśodhā's cradle, after getting fed by her. Whether it was the result of immaturity, the work of a mere babe, the Āḻvār kept wondering. Could not the Lord have assumed a gigantic Form, sprawling far and wide on an equally spacious platform, so as not to frighten God-lovers of the calibre of the Āḻvār? His boundless love unto the Lord makes him lose all perspective of time-sequence and the Lord's omnipotence itself, reducing Him to the abject position of a mere ward, under his loving protection. The Āḻvār's anxiety is whether the Divine Babe lying on a tender leaf. alone and unaided, might slip into the deep waters; at least there was Yaśodhā keeping constant vigil when He slept in the cradle, but now there is none beside the Babe (īṭu.)

koṭiyār māṭak kōḷūr akattum, puḷiṅkuṭiyum
maṭiyātu iṉṉē nī tuyil mēvi makiḻntatu-tāṉ
aṭiyār allal tavirtta acaivō? aṉṟēl, ip
paṭi-tāṉ nīṇṭu tāviya acaivō? paṇiyāyē. (VIII–3–5)

Translation

How is it, my Lord, You lovingly repose and turn not this side or that,
In kōḷūr and Puḷiṅkuṭi where banners play on castles smart?
Is it due to the fatigue caused (during Your avatāras)
When you did many a feat perform to alleviate
Your devotees' sufferings or the one that did result

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From the long strides you took to span the world immense? Which it is, may You unto me disclose.

Notes

(i) Seeing the Āḻvār's disquietitude over His lying alone on a tender leaf during the deluge, the Lord hastens to reveal unto him a different setting altogether, pertaining to His Iconic Form where He is attended upon by the votaries in their full complement. Mention of just two pilgrim centres, in this song, should be taken as covering the numerous other pilgrim centres where the Lord is reposing on His serpent-bed, such as Śrīraṅgam, Tirumeyyam, Kaṭanmallai, Tiruppēr, Aṉpil, Tiruvekhā etc.

(ii) The banners are displayed on house tops in the pilgrim centres, as a measure of decoration. But, in the eyes of the Āḻvār, this looms as a potential danger, helping the ungodly to easily locate this centre and invade it, intent upon harming the Lord enshrined there. Actually, the Āḻvār would want the Lord to remain out of reach of the devilish folks, even as Lord Kṛṣṇa grew up as a babe and then as a boy, in studious seclusion, fearing Kaṁsa's machinations.

(iii) The Lord, in His perfect Iconic Form, is seen reposing in the aforementioned pilgrim centres, since long, all for the sake of redeeming His straying Subjects over here. It is indeed noteworthy, rather praiseworthy that He has not changed His posture even once, by turning right or left and yet, for all this immense hardship undergone by Him, none seems to appreciate it. If the Lord has not got up in sheer disgust and gone back to the Celestium, it is because of His fond hope that, some day, some devotees might turn up and appreciate His great gesture.;

(iv) The Lord appears to be relaxing after all the labours undertaken by Him on behalf of Indra, spanning, on the very day of His emergence as Vāmana, all the worlds, high and low, setting His tender feet on hill

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and dale. The Āḻvār enquires of the Lord whether He would not permit him to massage His shoulders or the feet, whichever needed relief from pain.

paṇiyā amarar paṇivum, paṉpum, tāmē ām
aṇi ār āḻiyum caṅkamum ēntum avar kāṇmiṉ—
taṇiyā vem nōy ulakil tavirppāṉ, tirunīla
maṇi ār mēṉiyōṭu, eṉ maṉam cūḻa, varuvārē. (VIII–3–6)

Translation

The Supreme Lord, served and adored by the Celestials in Heaven.
Who know no Master other than He, has into this world come down,
Wielding the conch and discus, like unto lovely jewels,
Displaying His Form exquisite of saphire hue, the panacea for all ills;
Bewildered is my mind whether any evil shall on Him befall.

Notes

(i) The Lord's exquisite charm is such as to excite the fear, (needless, of course, in that holy Land of the Celestials in Heaven) in regard to His safety. As elucidated, time and again, such an attitude stems from the inordinate love borne by them for the Lord whose rare charm and effulgence, just like all good things loved and longed for, excite, rightly or wrongly, fears regarding their durability. Such being the case, it is no wonder, the Āḻvār grew apprehensive of the safety of the Lord, who has come down, in all His splendour, to this dark land of dirt and devilry.

(ii) The Celestials, referred to, in the first line of this song, are the 'Nitya Sūris', the ever-free angles in heaven, as distinguished from the 'Muktas', the souls that reached heaven, after emancipation from the bondage of birth and rebirth, that dreadful cyclic operation. Unlike the latter, the former have the unique distinction of never having prostituted and defiled their head and tongue by bowing before the unworthy and singing their praise.

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varuvār, celvār vaṇparicārattu iruṇṭa eṉ
tiruvāḷ mārvaṟku eṉ tiṟam collār; ceyvatu eṉ—
uru ār cakkaram caṅku cumantu, iṅku ummōṭu
orupāṭu uḷalvāṉ, ōr aṭiyāṉum uḷaṉ eṉṟē? (VIII–3–7)

Translation

Alas! those passing in and out of Vaṇparicāram, where resides my Lord
Bearing Tiru (Lakṣmi) on His winsome chest, tell Him not,
Here is a vassal ready to get close to Him and roam behind,
Carrying His discus and conch lovely, keeping one end.

Note

The Āḻvār, seated inside of the hollow of the sacred tamarind tree in Tirunakari, pines for the service of the Lord in nearby Tiruvaṇparicâram. He fancies that the passers-by are all moving to and from Tiruvaṇparicâram, only to tell the Lord over there about him and his ardour to serve Him, looking upon Him as his all (Vāsudevassarvamiti), and bring him back the message from that end. But, unfortunately, none goes near him and he concludes, with a galling sense of disappointment, that none of these persons has functioned in the manner he expected. By offering to keep up one end, the Āḻvār is only filling up a gap, the other end being always kept up by Lakṣmaṇa, ever in the Lord's service.

eṉṟē-eṉṉai uṉ ēr ār kōlat tiruntu aṭikkīḻ
niṉṟē āṭceyya nī koṇṭaruḷa niṉaippatutāṉ?
kuṉṟu ēḻ, pār ēḻ, cūḻ kaṭal, ñālam muḻu ēlum
niṉṟē tāviya nīḻ kaḻal āḻit tirumālē. (VIII–3–8)

Translation

Oh, Tirumāl, wielding the discus, when will You deem me fit
To get a lift unto your extremely lovely feet
And serve You firm and steadfast, for ever?
Merely standing on Your feet tall, you did cover
The worlds seven, islands seven, mountains seven and the oceans round about.

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Note

Seeing that there is none to plead with the Lord on his behalf, the Āḻvār himself now enquires of the Lord what exactly His intentions are in the matter of taking service from him. The Āḻvār sees in front of him the Lord, full of love, ready to concede his wish and yet, the Āḻvār can brook no further delay. He impresses upon the Lord his rapturous love unto His ornamental feet, so very alluring that He cannot bear being apart from Him, any longer. The Āḻvār longs to render selfless service unto the Lord, with single-minded devotion and with no break, remaining by His side always. The Lord, however, keeps silent and this makes the Āḻvār suspect whether the Lord insists on the necessary attainment in him to warrant such an aspiration. Reference to the Lord measuing all the worlds, setting his feet on all and sundries, is, therefore, significant. Did He not set His feet on one and all, high and low, unsolicited, caring least for their attainments? As a matter of fact, the Āḻvār is bound to serve the Lord, out of gratitude for His condescending to come all the way to Tiruvaṇparicāram. It further behoves him to go the whole hog out to serve the Lord and get Him fully relaxed after His arduous spanning of the worlds, setting His tender feet over hill and dale, full of rubbles and brambles. And yet, the initiative for this should come from the Lord and the Āḻvār is eagerly awaitng the day when He would invite him to do His bidding.

tirumāl! nāṉmukaṉ, ceñcaṭaiyāṉ eṉṟu ivarkaḷ em
perumāṉ taṉmaiyai yār aṟikiṟpār? pēci eṉ?
oru mā mutalvā! ūḻip pirāṉ! eṉṉai āḷuṭaik
karu mā mēṉiyaṉ! eṉpaṉ-eṉ kātal kalakkavē. (VIII–3–9)

Translation

Tirumāl, can either Nānmukaṉ or the one with matted locks red
Comprehend Your tenderness? 'tis indeed no good
Talking about this; with a mind by deep love confounded,
I keep saying, You are the Primate unique, my Lord,

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Time and all else are by You controlled
And so on, by Your exquisite Form of bluish tint enthralled.

Note

On the Āḻvār being told by the Lord that there is hardly any room for the fears entertained by him regarding His safety, when the four-headed Brahmā and a host of other Devas were there to attend on Him, the Āḻvār rebuts this position. He points out that they are not the persons to appreciate Him, in terms of His remarkable tenderness and bewitching Form, being mere self-centred boon-seekers. Even he (Āḻvār), soaked in God-love, could only touch a fringe of the Lord's tenderness of Form and keep on uttering a few things over and over again, in the exuberance of love for Him and do nothing more. Neither the self-seeking Devas nor the love-intoxicated Āḻvār is, therefore, up to the mark in the matter of expressing solicitude for the Lord's well-being.

kalakkam illā nal tava muṉivar, karai kaṇṭōr,
tulakkam illā vāṉavar ellām toḻuvārkaḷ;
malakkam eyta mā kaṭal-taṉṉaik kaṭaintāṉai
ulakka nām pukaḻkiṟpatu eṉ ceyvatu? uraiyīrē. (VIII–3–10)

Translation

There are the sages great with perfect clarity of mind,
The released Souls and Eternal Heroes of Heaven to attend
And dote on the Lord. who the mighty ocean churned;
Say then, if we frail beings can at all comprehend
His glory great, seeing that unto it there is no end.

Note

It was only when the Lord finally brought home the fact, quite reassuring, that He was carefully attended upon by the most eminent sages like Sanaka, Nandana and others, the 'Muktas', released from the bondage of samsāra and the 'Nityas', the Eternal Heroes in Heaven, and, above all, His own prowess unlimited, the Āḻvār's fears were set at

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naught. But then, it might be asked whether this was not already known to the Āḻvār, endowed by the Lord with perfect knowledge. The love-intoxicated Āḻvār just didn't know when and what could be the source of his anxiety about the Lord's well-being and when and how such anxiety would get cleared, as the illustrious Nampiḷḷai would put it.

uraiyā vem nōy tavira, aruḷ nīḷ muṭiyāṉai
varai ār māṭam maṉṉu kurukūre caṭakōpaṉ
urai ēy coltoṭai ōr āyiruttuḷ ip pattum
niraiyē vallār nīṭu ulakattup piṟavārē. (VIII–3–11)

Translation

Those that learn well these songs ten,
Out of the thousand divine songs of Caṭakōpaṉ,
Hailing from Kurukūr with its castles tall,
In adoration of the Lord wearing the crown tall,
Who did his parlous fears about Him quell,
Will never in this sprawling world be reborn.

Note

The benefit accruing from learning well this decad as set out above, is self-explanatory. It is, of course, not mere freedom from rebirth in this wretched land where there is none who would feel concerned about the Lord's safety and well-being but also eternal enjoyment in Heaven where the whole lot of them are dedicated to the Lord's well-being. As regards the reference in this song to the tall crown of the Sovereign Lord, here is a juicy interpretation furnished by a preceptor, named, Ammaṅki Ammāl :

" The Lord would appear to have nodded His crowned head, by way of assuring the Āḻvār about fulfilling his desire." The fulfilment of the Āḻvār's desire in this context, would mean exhibiting unto him the band of devotees who would attend on the Lord and do His behest, such as following Him, carrying His bow and arrows etc., thereby curing him of his erstwhile fears regarding the Lord's loneliness, unaided and unattended.

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Eighth Centum—Fourth Decad (VIII-4)
(Var kaṭā aruvi)

Preamble

The Lord's presence, in this dark land, alone and unaided, excited the reasonable fear of the Āḻvār that the worldlings would approach Him only to achieve their own selfish ends, with little or no care or love for Him. No doubt, the Lord allayed the Āḻvār's fears, as we saw towards the end of the last decad. Still, the Lord has a lingering doubt that, in the exuberance of the Āḻvār's love for Him, he might once again entertain similar fears about His safety and feel agitated. And so, He wanted to dispel the Āḻvār's fears, with no chance whatever of their revival and revealed unto him His invulnerable abode in Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu (in present Kerala State), out of bounds to the ungodly, attended by the mighty band of three thousand Vedic scholars, full of devotion. As a further precaution, the Lord also exhibited unto the Āḻvār, His wondrous deeds revealing His extra-ordinary strength and valour. With his fears thus eradicated *in toto*, the Āḻvār could whole-heartedly enjoy in this decad the Lord's exquisite beauty.

A striking parallel to this can be found in Lord Rāma's exhortation to Sugrīva, the monkey king, by way of dispelling his fears regarding Vibhīṣaṇa's admission into their camp. In the heated debate that was going on, opposition to the grant of asylum to Vibhīṣaṇa was mounting high. Intervening in the debate, the Lord asserted, *inter alia*, that He could, if He liked, destroy the Rākṣasas all the world over (not merely those in Laṅkā) with the mere tip of His thumb. This was enough to root out Sugrīva's fears about the possible ill-effects of granting asylum to Vibhīṣaṇa, come down from Rāvaṇa's Laṅka. The reassured Sugrīva, the erstwhile leader of the opposition in the debate that preceded, exclaimed:

" Oh, Rāma, You have a thorough mastery over the subtleties of Dharma; as the Protector of the entire universe, your creed is to instil happiness in one and all and it is indeed praiseworthy. I am now quite clear in my mind about the bonafides of Vibhīṣaṇa and it is but meet that I myself go up to him, anchored in the mid-air, and bring him here. "

While Śrī Rāma quelled the fears of Sugrīva and others in His camp by a mere utterance, as above, Lord Kṛṣṇa set at naught the

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grim fears of the on-lookers through actual demonstration of His immense strength, making mincemeat of the monstrous wrestlers, set up by Kamsa, in no time.

vār kaṭā aruvi yāṉai mā malaiyiṉ
maruppu iṇaik kuvaṭu iṟuttu, uruṭṭi,
ūr koḷ tiṉ pākaṉ uyir cekuttu, araṅkiṉ
mallaraik koṉṟu, cūḷ paraṉmēl
pōr kaṭā aracar puṟakkiṭa, māṭam
mīmicaik kañcaṉait takartta
cīr koḷ ciṟṟāyaṉ tirucceṅkuṉṟūril
tirucciṟṟāṟu eṅkaḷ celcārvē. (VIII–4–1)

Translation

Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu is unto us the fearless haven,
Where resides the victorious cowherd young (Kṛṣṇa) who pulled down
Kañcaṉ from the floor above and slew, having already slain
The wrestlers at the palace gate and the elephant terrific,
Like unto a mountain in must, pulling out its tusks,
The twin peaks and the mahout as well, making the armed kings around run back.

Notes

The valour, exhibited by the Lord unto the Āḻvār, permeates this very song, as seen from its martial tempo. Kuvalayāpīṭa, the huge elephant, in must, stationed right at the entrance to Kamsa's palace, is compared to a mountain with its cascades and the tusks of the elephant, the mountain peaks. The Divine cowherd boy slew the elephant effortlessly and killed the mahout also. The rest is self-explanatory and yet, it is interesting to note down here what Ācārya Ammaṅki Ammāl said about the Lord's decapitation of Kamsa.

" The Lord makes, at His pleasure, a king of a man and invests him with a crown and other insignia of royalty; but when it pleases Him to unmake the King, he is deprived, first, o

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all his royal emblems, and, thus stripped, the erstwhile King becomes a mere pigmy of a man and he is then punished as he might deserve. "

It was a frustrated and terribly frightened Kamsa, who had taken shelter in the first floor of his palace, who was pounced upon by young Kṛṣṇa who shot up to where the felon of an uncle was hiding. The Divine lad pulled Kamsa down, by the locks and broke him up like an earthen pot, still wet.

eṅkaḷ celcārvu, yāmuṭai amutam,
imaiyavar appaṉ, eṉ appaṉ,
poṅku mūvulakum paṭaittu, aḷittu, aḷikkum
poruntu mūvuruvaṉ, em aruvaṉ,
ceṅkayal ukaḷum tēm paṇai puṭai cūḷ
tiruceṅkuṉṟūrt tirucciṟṟāṟu
aṅku amarkiṉṟa ātiyāṉ allāl-
yāvar maṟṟu eṉ amar tuṇaiyē? (VIII–4–2)

Translation

Saviour have I none but the Primate, my very life,
Residing in fertile Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tiruccirṟāṟu, our haven safe,
The overlord of the Celestials, our Nectar, who takes on,
For the creation of the sprawling worlds, their sustentation
And dissolution, the triple forms appropriate.

Note

In the preceding song, the Lord displayed His valour and now He reveals His nectarean sweetness. When the Āḻvār refers to Him, as ' our Nectar ', instead of " My Nectar ', it only bespeaks his universal love and catholicity, his deep concern for us all, who have the great, good fortune to be connected with him, the Progenitor of the clan of ' Prapannas ', vide also II-7. The Lord discharges the functions of creation and dissolution, standing within Brahmā and Rudra, as their Internal Controller, while He Himself looks after the function of ' Protection ' of the whole Universe. Such a one stays permanently in Tiruccirṟāru in His Iconic Form, (Unlike His Incarnate Forms as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, of limited

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duration, in by-gone days), the safe haven of the Āḻvār and all those associated with him.

eṉ amar perumāṉ, imaiyavar perumāṉ,
iru nilam iṭanta em perumāṉ,
muṉṉai val viṉaikaḷ muḻutu uṭaṉ māḷa,
eṉṉai āḷkiṉṟa em perumāṉ,
teṉ ticaikku aṇi koḷ
tirucceṅkuṉṟūril tirucciṟṟāṟaṅkarai mīpāl
niṉṟa em perumāṉ aṭi allāl-caraṇ
niṉaippilum piṟitu illai eṉakkē. (VIII–4–3)

Translation

The Lord is the Master of the Celestials and me alike;
From beneath the waters deep, the wide Earth He pulled along;
His is the glory of destroying, in a trice, my dire sins age-long
And making me His vassal; embedded in my thoughts, as my sole refuge,
Are the feet of my Lord, Who does on the west bank reside
Of Tiruccheṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu, the beaming jewel of the south.

Note

The Lord is the Master of the exalted Celestials and that proclaims His Supremacy; but then, He is also the Master of the Āḻvār, the lowliest of the lowly and this brings out His amazing simplicity. The Lord could enlist the Āḻvār as His vassal, by revealing unto him His great prowess as the Sustainer and Redeemer of the universe, during and after the deluge, respectively; the Āḻvār, therefore, seeks refuge at His feet and his mind cannot turn towards any one else.

piṟitu illai eṉakku-periya mūvulakum
niṟaiyap pēr uruvamāy nimirnta
kuṟiya māṉ emmāṉ, kurai kaṭal kaṭainta
kōla māṇikkam, eṉ ammāṉ,
ceṟi kulai vāḻai, kamuku, teṅku aṇi cūḻ
tirucceṅkuṉṟūrt ti ucciṟṟāṟu
aṟiya meymmaiyē niṉṟa em perumāṉ
aṭiiṇai allatu-ōr araṇē. (VIII–4–4)

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Translation

Refuge have I none but the pair of feet of my Lord,
Who stays in Tirucciṟṟāṟu with orchards, fine and fertile,
In all His true splendour, the Benefactor great, Who did unto me reveal
His emerald Form lovely, Vāmana, my Sire, Who grew big and spread
All the worlds over, who the bellowing ocean once churned.

Notes

(i) If, as a tender Babe, the Lord could hold in His stomach all the worlds, where was the need for Him to grow big and span all the worlds in three strides, instead of doing it in His diminutive Form as Vāmana, with which He had demanded the gift of land from Bali? The great Nampiḷḷai has a ready answer, admirable as usual. The expansion of the Lord's Form into Tṛvikrama, was due to the exuberance of His joy in having accomplished the mission for which He incarnated.

(ii) Whenever the episode of the churning of the ocean is alluded to, the Āḻvār invariably feels why the Lord, of remarkable tenderness, should have under taken all the trouble, when there were large numbers of Devas and Asuras, rugged enough, for the job. Actually, those guys, with all their complement, were not equal to the task and the Lord had to assume two different forms and join both the groups, so as to put His own shoulders to the wheel and deliver the goods.

(iii) The Lord of such great prowess has manifested Himself in all His pristine splendour in the Iconic Form in which He stays at Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu, so that every one could recognise Him as the Supreme Lord.

allatu ŏr araṇum avaṉil vēṟu illai;
atu poruḷ ākilum, avaṉai
allatu eṉ āvi amarntu aṉaikillātu;
ātalāl, avaṉ uṟaikiṉṟa

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nalla nāṉmaṟaiyōr vēḷviyuḷ maṭutta
naṟum pukai vicumpu oḷi maṟaikkum
nalla niḷ māṭat tirucceṅkuṉṟūril
tirucciṟṟāṟu eṉakku nal araṇē. (VIII–4–5)

Translation

True 'tis, the Lord enshrined in temples elsewhere isn't different
From the One in Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu enshrined and yet
My mind abides not, in any other; 'tis indeed my haven safe,
Where there are castles, tall and elegant and the fumes fragrant
Shoot from the ritual fire and darken the firmament.

Notes

(i) While conceding the fact that the Lord, enshrined in Tirucciṟṟāṟu, also graces many other pilgrim centres, the Āḻvār says that his mind stands rivetted to this particular centre. This is like Hanumān having abjured even the Heaven and preferred to stay in this abode itself, saying, " Bhāvo nānyatra gacchati ".

(ii) The rituals performed by the Brahmins of this sacred place were not for securing any selfish ends and thus 'niṣkāmya', done, not with an eye on results, but as an end in itself. Even if there was a motive behind, it could be only by way of warding off the evil forces, the ungodly, so that no harm shall befall the Deity. This is, by-no-means, objectionable, as Nampiḷḷai would say. Even the great Rāmānuja had recourse to special rituals, using spells and incantations invoking Lord Veṅkaṭeśvara of Holy Tirupati, for cutting out the seemingly interminable life of that felon, the cruel Cola king, kṛmikaṇṭa (worm-necked) whose religious persecution had forced that Saint to stay away from Sriraṅgam for eleven long years. After a lapse of two or three days, a stinking smell, like that of singed hair, emanated from the sacrificial fire, whereupon Saint Rāmānuja stopped the ceremony, guessing that the heretical Cōḷa must be dead. The same day, a doorkeeper of Cōḷa poked the king in the neck with a staff,

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causing a loathsome stinking sore, full of vermin and the King gave up his ghost.

eṉakku nal araṇai, eṉatu ār uyirai,
imaiyavar tanta tāy-taṉṉai,
taṉakkum taṉ taṉmai aṟivu-aṟiyāṉai,
taṭam kaṭal-palḷi ammāṉai,
maṉakkoḷ cī· mūvāyiravar-vaṉ civaṉum,
ayaṉum tāṉum oppār-vāḻ
kaṉakkoḷ tiṇ māṭat tirucceṅkuṉṟūril
tirucciṟṟāṟu ataṉuḷ kaṇṭēṉē. (VIII–4–6)

Translation

My haven safe, my sole Sustainer, the All-in-one unto Celestials,
He, who can't gauge His own disposition (unfathomable),
He. who does on the ocean vast repose, I could envision
In Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu, abounding in solid mansions
And Brahmins numbering three thousand, potent like the mighty Civaṉ
And Ayaṉ, in whose whose hearts the Lord stands enshrined.

Notes

(i) It may be recalled that, as already mentioned in the preamble to this decad, the Lord pacified the Āḻvār and disarmed him of his fears, by pointing out to him this very setting. The Lord is safe and sound in this pilgrim centre, surrounded by three thousand brahmins who are as potent as Brahmā and Śivā and could as well discharge the functions assigned by the Lord to those exalted functionaries. c.f. Śloka 20 of Āḷavantār's Stotra Ratna-" tvadāśritānaam jagadudbhavasthiti, praṇāsa samsāra vimocanadayaḥ bhavanti leela, " which means:

" The creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe, release from family bondage etc., constitute the sporting activities of Your devotees themselves ".

(ii) These Brahmins, immersed in devout contemplation of the Lord's numerous auspicious traits, are ever alert to the impending danger, ṣtudiously safeguarding the

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Deity of their hearts. They are on a par with Sage Bharadvāja, who was apprehensive of the safety of Śrī Rāma and party in exile, during the interval between their first meeting with him and their subsequent return after vanquishing Rāvaṇa.

tirucceṅkuṉṟūril tirucciṟṟāṟu-ataṉuḷ
kaṇṭa at tiruvaṭi eṉṟum-
tiruc ceyya kamalak kaṇṇum, cevvāyum,
cevvaṭiyum, ceyya kaiyum,
tiruc ceyya kamala untiyum, ceyya
kamalai mārpum, ceyya uṭaiyum,
tiruc ceyya muṭiyum, āramum, paṭaiyum
tikaḻa-eṉ cintaiyuḷāṉē. (VIII–4–7)

Translation

Lodged in my heart for ever is the Lord, I envision
In Tirucciṟṟāṟu with red lotus-eyes, coral lips and feet red,
Red palms, the navel lovely, bearing the lotus red,
The chest red, bearing (Lakṣmi) the lotus-born,
Silken robes red, the crown red, the lovely jewels and gleaming weapons.

Note

The Āḻvār goes into the details of the Lord's exquisite charm — the eyes, broad and bewitching, like the red lotus in fresh bloom, the stabilising smile, that is, the Lord's smile from His coral lips which stabilises the attraction held out by His gracious looks unto the votaries, the lovely feet at which the votaries, enthralled by the Lord's scintillating smiles, seek refuge, the hands that gather up and embrace those seeking refuge at His feet, the navel, the seat of all creation, the centre of eternal attraction and enjoyment, the winsome chest bearing the Divine Mother, the great intercessor, who could wean away even the ungodly and make them God-bent, the matching robes, the fear-dispelling crown proclaiming the Lord's sovereignty and the beneficent weapons. With this intense enjoyment of the

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Lord's regal Form, inch by inch, could there at all be any room for any kind of fear in the Āḻvār's mind?

tikaḻa eṉ cintaiyuḷ iruntāṉai,
ceḻu nilattēvar nāṉmaṟaiyōr
ticai kaikūppi, ēttum tirucceṅkuṉṟūril
tirucciṉṟāṟṟaṅ karaiyāṉai,
pukar koḷ vāṉavarkaḷ pukaliṭam-taṉṉai,
acurar vaṉ kaiyar vem kūṟṟai,
pukaḻumāṟu ariyēṉ-poruntu mūvulakum
paṭaippoṭu keṭuppuk kāppavaṉē. (VIII–4–8)

Translation

The Lord sparkling in my heart, Who in holy Tirucciṉṟāṟu resides,
Adored by the vedic scholars, brahmins bright, from all sides,
The shelter safe unto exalted Devas but deadly unto Asura hordes,
The great Sire, who creates, sustains and dissolves the three worlds,
Him I hardly know how unto my heart's fill I can laud.

Notes

(i) The exaltation of the Devas results from their ability to grant the boons, sought by their respective votaries. Even these luminaries seek refuge in the Supreme Lord in times of dire need and danger. Did not the Lord save Prajāpati (Brahmā) from a calamity like the spoliation of the vedas and Paśupati (Śiva) from the sin of patricide and molestation by demons, besides conferring on them several other benefits? At the same time, the Lord is worse than deadly to the ungodly Asuras, who give endless trouble to Devas.

(ii) The Āḻvār cannot resist the urge to praise the Lord of such great glory but, at the same time, he does not know how to laud Him, the precise manner in which he could

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sing the Lord's praise. At best, he can only say, in general terms, that the Lord controls the triple functions of creation, sustentation and dissolution of the three worlds and so on.

paṭaippoṭu keṭuppuk kāppavaṉ, pirama
paramparaṉ, civappirāṉ avaṉē;
iṭaippukku ōr uruvum oḷivu illai avaṉē;
pukaḻvu illai; yāvaiyum tāṉē-
koṭaip perum pukaḻār iṉaiyar taṉ āṉār
kūriya viccaiyōṭu oḻukkam
naṭaip pali iyaṟkait tirucceṅkuṉṟūril
tirucciṟṟāṟu amarnta nātaṉē. (VIII–4–9)

Translation

The Lord, Who lovingly stays in Tirucciṟṟāṟu where do reside
The Brahmins, known alike for their piety and generosity, richly endowed
With knowledge sharp and power immense and in worship well engaged,
Is the One, Who, creation, sustentation and dissolution, controls,
Who, Brahmā and Śiva, directs, as their Internal Controller
And staying in between them protects the Universe, pervades every one
And things, one and all; 'tis indeed no exaggeration.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār avers that the Lord, enshrined in holy Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu is the One, who controls all creatures from Brahmā down to the tiny insect and directs them through the different stages of creation, sustenance and dissolution, like unto the Soul directing and supporting the body.

(ii) This song also highlights the manifold glory of the Brahmins residing in this holy centre, whose attainments place them on a par with the Lord Himself. The Āḻvār,

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finds it really heartening that there are a good many of them, attending on the Lord unremittingly, with great devotion.

amarnta nāṭaṇai, avar avar āki,
avarkku aruḷ aruḷum ammāṇāi,
amarnta taṇ paḷaṇat tirucceṅkuṉṟūril
tirucciṟṟāṟṟaṅ karaiyāṇai,
amarnta cīr mūvāyiravar vētiyarkaḷ
tampati avaṇitēvar vāḻvu
amarnta māyōṇai, mukkaṇ ammāṇai,
nāṉmukaṇai-amarntēṉē. (VIII–4–10)

The worthy Master, the Lover great of His votaries all,
The great Granter of boons by them sought, one and all,
Who resides in fertile Tirucciṟṟāṟu, the home and hearth
Of the three thousand brahmins and Vaiṣṇavas, the Devas on Earth,
The wondrous Lord I have attained, who dwells within
The triple-eyed Sire (Śiva) and (Brahmā) Nāṉmukaṉ.

Note

The Supreme Lord, Mahā Viṣṇu alone deserves the appellation, 'Master'. His supremacy notwithstanding, He has made Himself visible and easily accessible to one and all, staying in the holy Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu. The Āḻvār says, he has attained the Great Master, right here. The Lord is the one and only Giver, a liberal Donor, who exults in lavishing His bounty on all those who seek favours from Him.

tēṉai, naṉ pālai, kaṉṉalai, amutai,
tiruntu ulaku uṇṭa ammāṇai,
vāṉa nāṉmukaṇai malarnta taṇ koppūḻ
malarmicaip paṭaitta māyōṇai,
kōṉai, vaṇ kurukūr vaṇ caṭakōpaṉ
coṉṉa āyirattuḷ ip pattum
vāṉiṉ mītu ēṟṟi aruḷceytu, muṭikkum
piṟavi mā māyak kūttiṉaiyē. (VIII–4–11

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Translation

These ten songs out of the thousand of Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Adoring the Lord, highly delicious, like honey, milk and cane-juice,
Who in His stomach did all the worlds sustain,
The wondrous Lord, who did on the cool lotus, from His navel, produce
The exalted Brahmā, will their chanters lift unto Heaven
And engage them in the eternal service of the Lord,
The mysterious cycle of birth and rebirth, no more to dread.

Notes

(i) Release from family bondage, that is, end of the great saga of worldly life and attainment of the final bliss of eternal service unto the Lord in Heaven are the benefits of chanting this decad. Attainment of the heavenly bliss automatically results in the severance of worldly ties, like unto the prince, languishing in prison, being crowned as soon as the king dies, (so as to avoid the land going without a monarch even for a while), followed by the removal of his fetters.

(ii) The Āḻvār grew apprehensive of the Lord's safety because of His extra-ordinary sweetness, like unto honey, milk and cane-juice and this fear got dispelled by the recollection of the Lord's unique prowess in sustaining all the worlds, during the deluge.

Eighth Centum—Fifth Decad (VIII-5)
(Māyak kūttā)

Preamble

In the third decad of this centum, the Āḻvār grew apprehensive of the safety of the Lord of exquisite charm, moving along in this wicked land alone and unattended. The Āḻvār could, however, regain his composure, shaking off the fear in question, on the assurance given by the Lord, vide VIII-3-10. The following decad revealed an Āḻvār, fully relieved of his erstwhile fears, but the ntense mental enjoyment of the Lord's regal Form, enchanting

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every inch, resorted to by the Āḻvār in VIII-4-7, once again resulted in a deep yearning, an insatiable longing for external perception of the Lord's Form, as envisioned by him and getting locked in His sweet embrace. Non-fulfilment of his longing has consigned the Āḻvār to the bottom-most depths of dejection, the like of which has not been witnessed in the earlier decade. He cries out, like unto one bodily trapped in a forest fire and his limbs appear to be even more worn out than their owner. The Saint beckons the Lord to appear before him in all His regal splendour, wearing His crown, tall and majestic and moving along, like the exhilarating rain-cloud, the rising Sun, so on and so forth. The Lord did not, however, respond and so, this decad ends on a despondent note, the Āḻvār being led to believe that he would just pass away, immured in grief.

māyak kūttā! vāmaṇā! viṉaiyēṉ kaṇṇā! kaṇ, kai, kāl
tūya ceyya maḷarkaḷā, cōtic cevvāy mukiḻatā,
cāyal cāmat tirumēṉi taṉ pācaṭaiyā, tāmarai nīḷ
vācat taṭampōl varuvāṉē! oṟunāḷ kāṇa vārāyē. (VIII–5–1)

Translation

Wondrous Lord, Oh, Vāmaṇā, oh, Kaṇṇā beyond this sinner's reach!
With eyes, hands and feet like red lotus in fresh bloom,
Lips, red and radiant, cool, green, leaf-like complexion, You seem,
As You walk along, a huge lotus pond in motion, full of fragrance!
May it please You to appear before me, for a day at least.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār's request to the Lord is that He should appear before him like a lotus pond, the mere sight of which quenches one's deep thirst. The Lord's eyes, hands and feet look like red lotus flowers in bloom. His coral lips with bewitching smiles resemble the lovely lily and His emerald form looks like the green pond with lotus leaves. This completes the picture of the lotus pond, envisaged by the Āḻvār. c.f. 'Karacaraṇa Saroje..... *Haṛsarasi*'—(Mukunda Mālā)

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(ii) What precisely egged the Āḻvār on to such a longing has also been indicated in this song. As he was comtemplating the Lord's incarnation as the bewitching Vāmaṇa, at Indra's behest, the Āḻvār longed that He should also present such an exquisite Form to him. If the Lord's incarnation as Vāmaṇa was for the sake of Indra, His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa was only to torment the Āḻvār, by going back to the Celestium, just six weeks before his coming into this abode, like unto a dainty dish hitting against the teeth and falling to the ground without getting inside the mouth to be chewed with great relish. That is why the Āḻvār calls Kṛṣṇa, as the one beyond his (sinner's) reach.

kāṇa vārāy eṉṟu eṉṟu, kaṇṇum vāyum tuvarntu, aṭiyēṉ
nāṇi, nal nāttu alamantāḷ, iraṅki, oṟunāḷ nī, antō!
kāṇa vārāy!—karu nāyiṟu utikkum karu mā māṇikka
nāḷ nal malaipol cuṭarc cōti muṭi cēr ceṉṉi ammāṇē!
(VIII–5–2)

Translation

Many a time did I call you out, with dried up eyes
And lips parched up, that You do before me appear
Like unto a dark, rising Sun, shedding the lustre rare,
Like the saphire grand, sporting Your radiant crown, neatly poised
On locks beaming like a lovely mountain, just sprung up;
Alas! for me to behold but once, You don't turn up,
Stricken with shame, fatigued do I on this good Earth languish.

Notes

(i) The eyes have become dry and worn out, looking for the Lord in all directions, hoping that He might come from any direction; the lips have become parched up, by calling Him out frequently. The Āḻvār's stinging shame is due to the Lord not turning up, even though he had not called him for trivial personal gains but merely for the pleasure of beholding Him. This might make the worldlings look at him askance, in a derisive spirit, that it is such an unresponsive Lord, he is madly

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after. The expression 'Good Earth' could either be in the ironical sense, indicating its notriety indirectly, or might mean, as Piḷḷān would put it, that the Earth is really a good place for all but the Āḻvār, inasmuch as all others presumably enjoy the Lord, quietly as could be inferred from their not calling Him out, as the Āḻvār does. It seems the Āḻvār is the solitary soul, left without such enjoyment and, therefore, crying out, as he has been doing.

(ii) The Sun, rising over the emerald mount, appears to be dark and the Lord's person is like an emerald mountain and hence, the imagery.

muṭicēr ceṉṉi ammâ! niṉ moy pūm tāmat taṇ tuḻāyk
kaṭicēr kaṉṉip perumāṉē! eṉṟu eṉṟu ēṅki aḻutakkāl,
paṭicēr makarak kuḻaikaḻum, pavaḷa vāyum, nāl tōḷum,
tuṭi cēr iṭaiyum amaintatu ōr tū nīr mukil pōl tōṉṟāyē.
(VIII–5–3)

Translation

Time and again, did I in deep anguish call You out,
Oh, Sire, donning on Your lovely locks the majestic crown,
Oh, Lord, wearing the tulaci garland, pretty and fragrant;
But You wouldn't before me appear and exhibit Your pearl pendants,
Which Your Form exquisite befit, coral lips, shoulders four,
Thin waist and Your complexion like rain-cloud bearing water clear.

Note

The Āḻvār has been crying himself hoarse, pining for the external perception of the Lord's enchanting Form and enjoying it in all it details. When, due to constant clamouring, his voice gets choked, it should indeed compel the Lord to come down at once and see what has gone wrong with the yearning devotee. And yet, He has not turned up, making the Āḻvār suspect whether He is beyond his ear-shot.

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tū nīr mukil pōl tōṉṟum niṉ cuṭar koḷ vaṭivum, kaṉivāyum,
tē nīṟk kamalak kaṇkaḷum vantu, eṉ cintai niṟaintavā-
mā ṟīr veḷḷi malaitaṉmēl vaṇ kār nīla mukil pōla,
tū nīṟk kaṭaluḷ tuyilvāṉē! entāy!—collamāṭṭēṉē. (VIII–5–4)

Translation

My Sire, reposing in the Milk-ocean on serpent-bed,
Like unto the dark rain-cloud on the crest of silvery mount,
Embedded in deep waters! describe I can't
How my thoughts are filled with Your Form radiant,
Like the rain-cloud bearing water clear, lips red
And eyes lovely, akin to lotus which sweet water holds.

Notes

(i) This song and the next, striking a jubilant note, the exact opposite of what is revealed by the other songs in this decad, are indeed ironically couched. The Āḻvār really feels vexed that the Lord's sweet and enchanting Form torments his thoughts, in the absence of the external enjoyment, longed for, by him.

(ii) Here is indeed a grand poetic imagery. The cloud-hued Lord resting on Ādi-Śeṣa, the white serpent, in the Milk-ocean, is likened to the transparent water-laden cloud on the crest of a white mountain embedded in the deep oceanic waters. Not only this enchanting Form but the lovely eyes and the fruit-like lips appear before the Āḻvār and each one of these tempts the Āḻvār to enjoy them separately and thus torments him.

colla māṭṭēṉ aṭiyēṉ-uṉ tuḷaṅku cōtit tiruppātam
ellai il cīr iḷa nāyiṟu iraṇṭupōl eṉ uḷḷavā;
allal eṉṉum iruḷ cērtaṟku upāyam eṉṉē-āḷi cūḻ
mallai ñālam muḻutu uṇṭa mā nīṟk koṇṭal vaṇṇaṉē?
(VIII–5–5)

Translation

Oh, Lord, You are like unto a water-laden cloud,
The worlds, by oceans surrounded, You did in Your stomach hold,

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The radiance within me, shed by Your dazzling feet superfine,
Like unto a pair of rising Suns, I just can't define,
Say then, how I can the affliction dark, of forgetfulness. attain.

Notes

Āḻvār to the Lord:

"My Lord, Your enchanting Form is tormenting my mind without respite; I can survive only if I forget all about this. I can, however, never forget this and I, therefore, pray unto You, my great benefactor, to suggest ways and means of forgetting You altogether".

Lord: "Āḻvār, You haven't gained my physical presence as yet. It should, therefore, be possible for you to forget me easily".

Āḻvār: "Oh, Sire, have I not told You already (in I-10-10) that I can never more forget You, firmly lodged in my heart? Having cut out my nescience, *in toto*, through Your redemptive grace, Your dazzling feet are in my mind firmly implanted. It is up to You now to solve this riddle and find out some means by which I can forget You and be spared all this misery".

So then, here is a peculiar problem for the frustrated Āḻvār who can't have the external enjoyment, intensely longed for by him and is yet continually tormented by the radiance of the Lord's dazzling feet, shining in his head. The Āḻvār prays unto the Lord to put out this light and induce darkness that can make him forget Him altogether. In Nampiḷḷai's Īṭu commentary, two interpretations have been set out: According to Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the Āḻvār prays unto the Lord: "If You are intent upon tormenting me by withholding from me Your physical presence, better induce in me the dark nescience, rather suggest how I can acquire it".

Āācarya Ammaṅki Ammāl would say: "With Your dazzling feet illumining my mind all the time, there is no room whatever for nescience, the distressing darkness; if such darkness could, however, be induced in me, I can safely

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align myself with the worldlings and run after food and raiment like them, forgetting You altogether."

koṇṭal vaṇṇā! kuṭakkūttā! viṇaiyēṉ kaṇṇā! kaṇṇā! eṉ
aṇṭa vāṇā! eṉṟu, eṉṉai āḷak kūppiṭṭu aḷaittakkāl,
viṇ-tanmēl-tāṉ, maṇmēl-taṉ, viri nīrk kaṭal-tāṉ, marṟuttāṉ,
toṇṭaṉēṉ uṉ kaḻalkāṇa, oṟunāḷ vantu, tōṉṟāyē. (VIII–5–6)

Translation

Oh, cloud-hued Lord, Oh, Pot-dancer, when this sinner calls You out,
Oh, Kaṇṇā, Oh, Kaṇṇā, Oh, heavenly Lord, so that You may enlist
Me, in your service, even for a day You appear not
Before this vassal either from Heaven, Earth or oceanic waters vast
Or from wherever You might be, omnipresent that You are,
For me to behold your lovely feet.

Note

Where there is a will, there is a way. The Āḻvār feels poignantly why the Lord, who could, if He so wills, come from anywhere, does not present Himself before him. He could manifest Himself right from the space above, come down from Heaven in all that transcendent splendour, from the Earth where He had already incarnated as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa or from the vast ocean, the Vyūha, the seat of all His creative activities, or from any of the Pilgrim centres, in His Iconic manifestation or from anywhere else, being all-pervasive, in every post and pillar. The Lord's feet constitute the Āḻvār's source of subsistence and it is only to behold them and render service at those very feet that the Āḻvār is inviting the Lord to appear before him, at least one day.

vantu tōṉṟāy; aṉṟēl, uṉ vaiyam tāya malar aṭikkīḻ
munti vantu yāṉ niṟpa, mukappē kūvip paṇikoḷḷāy—
centaṉ kamalak kaṇ, kai, kāl, civanta vāy ōr karu nāyiṟu
antam illāk katir parappi, alarntatu okkum ammāṉē!
(VIII–5–7)

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Translation

Oh, radiant Lord, like unto the endless rays of a black Sun,
With eyes like lotus, cool and red, hands, feet and lips, all red,
Even if You appear not before me, pray, lift me on
To Your lotus feet, which did span all the worlds
And from this vassal service do command.

Note

The Āḻvār is granting the Lord the option either to come down here so that he may behold Him or if, in the light of His grandeur and the pettiness of the supplicant, He doesn't deign to come, He would do well to take him over to that end (Heaven). There, the Āḻvār would not only behold the Lord and have his heart's fill but he would also want the Lord to take service from him, so that he could render unstinting service at the Lord's feet which spanned the worlds and, in the process, stepped on the heads of one and all, without distinction of high and low, Vaśiṣṭa or caṇḍāla. The Lord's enchanting beauty has made the Āḻvār pine for Him and like the fish out of water, he can't bear being apart from Him any longer and hence, this kind of insistence on his part.

okkum ammāṉ uruvam eṉṟu, uḷḷam kuḻaintu nāḷ nāḷum
tokka mēkap pal kuḻaṅkaḷ kāṇumtōṟum, tolaivaṉ nāṉ;
takka aivar-tamakkāy aṉṟu īr aimpatiṉmar tāḷ cāyap
pukka naltērt taṉippākā! vārāy-ituvō poruttamē? (VIII–5–8)

Translation

Every time I see the gathering clouds, I am by Your memory stung,
My Lord, Your fame as the devotee's henchman is far flung,
As [Arujuna's] charioteer unique, You led to victory the worthy five,
Their hundred cousins crumbling down yet down you don't dive
And regale me [in that very Form],
Is this how You do unto Your fame conform?

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Note

Here is the Āḻvār who sees in the rain-clouds, gathered up above, the Lord's likeness and is haunted by His memory, unlike the worldlings who would think of such clouds only in terms of the rainfall and the bumper crop. Even the Pāṇḍavas, on whose behalf the Lord underwent immense hardships and did even the menial service of driving Arjuna's chariot, were not of the grand calibre of the Āḻvār. And yet, the Lord known for His readiness to serve His devotees, does not deign to appear before the Āḻvār and satisfy his craving to behold Him and feast his eyes on His insatiable beauty. The Āḻvār's poser, as in this song, would seem to raise grave doubts about the veracity of the great epic of Mahā Bhārata, the wondrous deeds performed by the Lorp and His breath-taking activities on behalf of His devotees, establishing His fame as a partisan of His devotees. Could it be mere propaganda, carried on, through His hirelings, the sages?

ituvō poruttam? miṉ āḻip paṭaiyāy! ēṟum irum ciṟaippuḷ—
atuvē koṭiyā uyarttāṉē! eṉṟu eṉṟu ēṅki aḻutakkāl,
etuvēyākak karutuṁkol-im mā ñālam poṟai tīrppāṉ!
matu vār cōlai uttara maturaip piṟanta māyaṉē? (VIII–5–9)

Translation

Oh, wielder of the effulgent discus, that mighty weapon!
On Your banner is that bird, Your carrier with large plumes,
How indeed your callousness can unto Your fame conform,
Often do I ask myself and keep sobbing; what is at all the intention,
I can hardly guess, of the wondrous Lord, Who was born
In Uttaramaturai (Mathurā), abounding in orchards fine.

Notes

The Āḻvār is now revolving within his mind, what the Lord of wondrous deeds and auspicious traits, who, during His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa, took birth at Mathurā (in Uttara Pradeś) might be intending to do with him. Let alone what He did for the Pāṇḍvas, as against the Kauravas, how indeed

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does He mingle with Garuḍa, who (as Āḷavantār puts it, in Śloka 41 of his Stotra Ratna) is said to fulfil several roles, as servant, friend, vehicle (carrier), seat, banner, canopy and fan! Does the Lord really take all this service from Garuḍa or does He keep him also at a distance, as is the case with the Āḻvār? If the Lord so wills, He could come down to the Āḻvār, mounted on Garuḍa. Perhaps, even Garuḍa is not pressed into service, by the Lord, these days!

And then, the discus could have jolly well been commissioned by the Lord, to cut out all those impediments, which operate as a bar to the Āḻvār's union with Him and yet, if He has not done so. that only means, His relationship with the discus is no better than that which subsists between Him and the Āḻvār.

The Āḻvār is now left a-guessing what precisely the Lord's intentions might be, with regard to him.

piṟanta māyā! pāratam poṟuta māyā! ni iṉṉē
ciṟanta kāl, tī, nīr, vāṉ, maṇ, piṟavum āya perumāṉē!
kaṟanta pāluḷ neyyē pōl ivaṟṟuḷ eṅkum kaṇṭukoḷ—
iṟantu niṉṟa peru māyā! uṉṉai eṅkē kāṇkēṉē? (VIII–5–10)

Translation

Wondrous indeed are Your incarnations, oh, Lord,
Many a wonder You did, during the battle of Bhârata, perform,
The famous elements five and all things from them derived
Are unto You, the bodies many; like ghee, latent in milk fresh drawn,
You do in all things mysteriously abide; where can I find you indeed?

Notes

(i) No doubt, the Lord exhibited His amazing simplicity during the Incarnations, betokening His loving condescension. But the Āḻvār, born at a later time, missed them all. Again, the Lord is said to abide in all beings and things and yet, He cannot be see

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with the naked eye. Where then could the Lord be seen is the question put by the Āḻvār in this song. He is really worried whether he would just pass away without realising his desire to come face to face with the Lord.

(ii) The Lord's incarnation itself is a matter of great wonder. the birthless Being born, of course, at His sweet will and then His mingling with the rest, with no reservation. The wonders performed by Him, during His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa, were many indeed and, in particular, those bearing on the course and conduct of the great battle of Mahā Bhārata were: Taking up arms, at one stage, contrary to His earlier pledge not to wield any weapon, conversion of day into night, spotting out the vital centres of life, the vulnerable spot in the enemy attacking which would prove fatal, so on and so forth.

(iii) How could it be asserted that the Invisible Lord resides in all creatures and things? The Upaniṣad provides the answer: "ghrutamiva payasi nigūḍaṁ". The milk is churned into butter, which again is melted into ghee. But none can, on the face of it, perceive the presence of ghee in milk. And so does the Lord abide unseen in all that exists.

eṅkē kāṇkēṉ, īṉ tuḻāy ammāṉ-taṉṉai yāṉ? eṉṟu eṉṟu,
aṅkē tāḻnta coṟkaḷāl, am taṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
ceṅkēḻ conṉa āyirattuḷ ivaiyum pattum vallārkaḷ,
iṅkē kāṇa, ip piṟappē makiḻvar-elliyum kālaiyē. (VIII–5–11)

Translation

Those that are conversant with these songs ten,
Out of the thousand elegant songs of Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Who did pine for the Lord, wearing tulaci garland superfine,
And with melting tenderness cry out where indeed he could behold Him,
Will, right here and now, enjoy with no intermission bliss supreme.

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Note

The end-song avers that those that learn this decad will be steeped in God-enjoyment, day and night, right in this world and, in this very birth, without undergoing the hardships and the vicissitudes which the Āḻvār had to pass through. The Lord will, on His part, make amends for His remissness in not responding to the Āḻvār's invitation, as in the opening song of this decad, to come and take service from him, by duly requiting the chanters of this decad. Unto these persons, He will rush up and shower on them divine bliss without intermission.

Eighth Centum—Sixth Decad (VIII-6)
(Elliyum kālaiyum)

Preamble

The Āḻvār's yearning, in the last decad, was indeed too deep for words. At the same time, it has to be stressed that, if the Jñāni loves God dearly, He loves the Jñāni even more. And so, the Lord's love for the Āḻvār also defies description. Stung by a deep sense of remorse over His laxity in not responding to the Āḻvār's invitation, the Lord pondered over the step to be taken by Him to placate the Āḻvār. But then, if He straightaway presented Himself before the Āḻvār, in his present state of mind, he would just collapse, due to excessive joy. It was, therefore, expedient that the Āḻvār's enjoyment of the Lord should be induced by stages, so as to be stable, without anything untoward happening. This was precisely the reason why Śrī Rāma despatched Hanumān first to meet Bharata and convey to him the news of His return from exile soon. It was only a day later, after availing of Sage Bharadwāja's hospitality en route, that Rama met Bharata who was meanwhile getting ready to receive the elder, back home from His long exile. Lord Kṛṣṇa likewise adopted the 'go-slow' tactics by making a night-halt outside Hastināpur and going to the citadel, only the next day. Meanwhile, news had reached the ardent devotees like Vidhura, of the impending visit of the Lord on His famous errand to Dhrutarāṣṭra's court. But for this phased programme, excessive joy due to the sudden arrival of Lord Kṛṣṇa

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would have upset those devotees and thrown them into a state of mental imbalance. In this particular case, the Lord who wished the Āḻvār to come and mingle with Him freely, stationed Himself at the pilgrim centre, known as Tirukkaṭittāṉam (in Kerala State). The Āḻvār, who got scent of it, felt greatly elated over the Lord's overwhelming love for him. He gives vent to his resultant joy, in this decad.

elliyum kālaiyum taṉṉai ninaintu eḻa,
nalla aruḷkaḷ namakkē tartū-aruḷceyvāṉ—
alli am taṇ am tuḻāy muṭi appaṉ ūr,
celvarkaḷ vāḻum, tirukkaṭittāṉamē. (VIII–6–1)

Translation

Tirukkaṭittāṉam, where reside the devotees rich, is the place
Where my Lord sporting tulaci garland cool and lovely, on
His crown, stays,
And salves us, shedding on us solely His extra-ordinary grace
And making us meditate on Him always [day and night].

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār is indeed overwhelmed by the Lord's spontaneous grace. Well, he doesn't take it on a *quid-pro-quo* basis, that is, he does not look at this influx of the Lord's extra-ordinary grace, making him meditate on Him day and night, as compensation for the grief he experienced in the last decad, but as one shed on him for the Lord's own pleasure and exultation, at His sweet will. What more? The Āḻvār feels that the Lord has not shed on any one else, not even the 'Nityas' in Heaven, grace of this magnitude. It is indeed most gratifying to the Āḻvār that the Lord presents Himself in Tirukkaṭittāṉam, wearing the tulaci garland, pretty and fragrant, as longed for by him in the third song of the last decad.

(ii) *Rich devotees*: The text of the song, as in the original refers to this pilgrim centre, as one inhabited by rich persons. The richness, alluded to here, is, however, not of the material kind but the '*Kaiṅkarya Śrī*' like

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that of Lakṣmaṇa who served Lord Rāma in all possible ways and was thus extremely rich in divine service. Real affluence lies in eternal service to the Lord.

tirukkaṭittāṉamum eṉṉuṭaic cīntaiyum
orukkaṭuttu, uḷḷē uṟaiyum pirāṉ kaṇṭīr-
ceruk kaṭuttu aṉṟu tikaitta arakkarai,
uruk keṭa, vāḷi poḷinta oruvaṉē. (VIII–6–2)

The Lord, who lovingly resides in Tirukkaṭittāṉam and my heart alike,
Is none but the Warrior great, Who arrows did rain
On the Asuras, who, filled with pride, had grown
Violent and war-mad, and destroyed them, in bulk.

Note

The Āḻvār acknowledges the Lord's great gesture in quelling the Asuras, symbolic of the clearing up of all the evil forces in him, the impediments that stood in the way of the Lord reclaiming him and thereafter, stepping on to Tirukkaṭittāṉam, the spring-board, whence He was to land right in the Āḻvār's heart, His ultimate destination. The Lord's attachment to the Jñāni's physical form even surpasses His love for the pilgrim centres, where He has condescended to shed His grace on the votaries in His 'Arca' Form. This is quite understandable, seeing that the very purpose of His manifestation in 'Arca' Form, is only to get hold of His subjects, by some means or the other. And when He gets His catch all right, and a big haul at that, His gratification knows no bounds. The Lord's stay in the pilgrim centres is thus not an end in itself but only a means for the reclamation of His subjects, His ultimate destination being the heart-centre of the subjects, spiritually regenerated through His redemptive grace. Once the destination is reached, the means employed for reaching it get relegated to a place of secondary importance. It is then the turn of a devotee like Pēy Āḻvār to request the Lord not to relax His interest in the pilgrim centres which operate as the spring-board whence the Lord could reach His devotees. It is now a case of the Lord loving the pilgrim centres, firstly, as

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places adored by His devotees, and secondly, out of gratitude to those centres for helping Him to relcaim the subjects, by making them God-bent (See aphorisms 169-174 of Śrī Vacana Bhūṣaṇam).;

oruvar, iruvar, ōr mūvar, eṉa niṉṟu,
uruvu karantu, uḷḷumtōṟum tittippāṉ-
tiru amar mārvaṉ, tirukkaṭittāṉattai
maruvi uṟaikiṉṟa māyap pirāṉē. (VIII–6–3)

Translation

The Warrior Great, Who did arrows on Asuras rain
Was seen first as one, then as two and three later on,
And at one time hardly visible; this wondrous Benefactor great,
Who bears Tiru (Lakṣmī) on His chest, does in Tirukkaṭittāṉam lovingly stay
And is indeed very sweet to contemplate.

Notes

(i) This song does not stand by itself, being but a follow-up of the preceding song. The warrior, referred to, is Śrī Rāma. When Rāvaṇa unleashed his special Reserve forces (Mūlabalam), after the valiant Rākṣasas had vanished, one by one, into the jaws of death, the manner in which this extra-ordinary situation, which struck unspeakable terror in the minds of the Devas, was handled by Śrī Rāma, is alluded to here. The battle was as spectacular as it was terrific and Vālmīki was simply thrilled by the uncanny and superhuman effort, displayed by Sri Rama. In śloka 22 of chapter 94 of Yuddha Kāṇḍa, it has been said that Rāma was hardly visible and yet, one could see the enormous extent of destruction wrought by Him. This only reveals the marvellous agility with which He went gyrating around, routing the enemy forces. A little further down, in ślokā 27, it has been stated that thousands of Rāmas were seen in action. Again, in the latter hālf of the same śloka, it has been stated that Rāma alone and

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none else could be seen on the battlefield. It was indeed a wonderful wonder of wonders the way the Lord encountered the enemies who were not only powerful but also very elusive.

(ii) The Lord exhibits even greater love towards the Āḻvār than that bestowed on the Divine Consort, borne on His very chest, the simple reason that he is Her ward. Again, the Lord loves Tirukkaṭittāṉam, only because it is adored by the Āḻvār. This has already been set out, at length, in the notes below the second song. Yet, it is mentioned here,only to reveal the Āḻvār's immense jubilation, as he meditates on this aspect.

māyap pirāṉ, eṉa valviṇai māyntu aṟa,
nēcattiṉāl neñcam-nāṭu kuṭikoṇṭāṉ-
tēcattu amarar tirukkaṭittāṉattai
vācap poḻil maṉṉu kōyil koṇṭāṉē. (VIII–6–4)

Translation

The wondrous Lord, Who, in Tirukkaṭittāṉam, stands enshrined,
Abounding in orchards, full of fragrance, the lovely resort
Of even the Celestials bright, has lovingly sought
The kingdom of my heart, to get my dire sins ruined.

Note

Whereas the Lord gives 'dharśan' to the votaries in the pilgrim centres only during stated hours, mostly by day, He stays for ever, in the heart of the Āḻvār, coveted by Him a great deal. This very thought, coupled with the realisation of the fact that the Lord has chosen to grace Tirukkaṭittāṉam, only to please him, has heightened the Āḻvār's joy.

kōyil koṇṭāṉ taṉ tirukkaṭittāṉattai;
kōyil koṇṭāṉ ataṉōṭum eṉ neñcakam;-
kōyilkoḻ teyvam ellām toḻa, vaikuntam
kōyil koṇṭa kuṭakkūtta ammāṉē. (VIII–6–5)

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Translation

The Lord Who is by the exalted Celestials adored,
Who has the high Heavens as His abode,
Who (as Kṛṣṇa) did the wondrous pot-dance perform
Is the One Who made Tirukkaṭittāṇam His home,
And has, along with that home, moved now into my heart,
Making it His new habitat.

Notes

(i) As already elucidated, Tirukkaṭittāṇam was but the stepping stone, the spring-board whence the Lord could get into the Āḻvār's heart. The Lord initially thought of entering the Āḻvār's heart, all alone, without His retinue and all that. But then, He changed His mind and entered the Alvar's heart along with that pilgrim centre itself c.f. Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻi V-2-10, where Peryāḻvār says that the Lord resorted unto his body with His entire retinue, the serpent-bed, the Milk-ocean and the Divine Consort and rested on the cool crest of the ocean, to grant him the necessary protection.

(ii) The Lord incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, among the cowherds and performed the pot-dance; to get over the resultant fatigue, He relased Himself at Tirukkaṭittāṇam and thence shifted to the Āḻvār's heart, along with that pilgrim centre.

kūtta ammāṉ, koṭiyēṉ iṭar murṟavum
māytta ammāṉ, matucūta ammāṉ, uṟai,
pūtta poḻil taṉ tirukkaṭittāṇattai
ētta, nillā-kuṟikkoḻmiṉ iṭarē. (VIII–6–6)

Translation

Tirukkaṭittāṇam, the holy centre, cool and nice, amid orchards, in full bloom,
Where resides my Lord of wondrous deeds, Matucūtaṉ, my Sire,
Who did, in full, destroy the miseries of this sinner dire,

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Will set at naught our miseries, one and all, be sure,
The moment we adore it, with love supreme.

Note

Lest the preceding song should give some the impression that the pilgrim centre, known as Tirukkaṭittāṉam, has ceased to exist as such, having entered the Āḻvār's heart, *en masse* the Āḻvār now calls upon his fellow-beings to worship the holy centre. As already elaborated upon in the notes below the second song of this decad, the pilgrim centres acquire importance, firstly, as places adored by the Lord's devotees and hence loved by the Lord as well, and secondly, as the centres of attraction helping the Lord to reclaim His subjects, by making them God-bent and hence gratefully loved by the Lord.

koḷmiṉ, iṭar keṭa, uḷḷattu-kōvintaṉ,
maṉ viṇ muḻutum aḷanta oṇ tāmarai
maṉṉavar tām toḻa, vāṉavar tām vantu
naṉṉu tirukkaṭittāṉa nakarē. (VIII–6–7)

Translation

Set your mind on Tirukkaṭittāṉam, the holy city,
Where the people of this land worship the lotus feet lovely,
Of Kōvintaṉ, which, the earth and the regions above, did measure wholly,
And the denizens of heaven also come down and adore,
So that all your miseries do instantly disappear.

Notes

(i) In the preceding song, the Āḻvār exhorted the worldlings to worship this pilgrim centre but here he says it would suffice if they just think of the place.

(ii) Even as Heaven is the land of the Nityas (Eternal Heroes), the pilgrim centres on Earth belong to us, the earthlings, as Nampiḷḷai would put it. It should indeed be a matter of deep wonder to the exalted 'Nityas' in Heaven, with profound knowledge, how the Great Lord abides in the midst of the worldlings over here, steeped in dark

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nescience and is easily accessible to them, an act of grace galore, denoting His amazing simplicity, the very antithesis of Heavenly grandeur and majesty (Paratva or transcendent glory). And so, it is a case of the 'Nityas' coming down here to have a taste of His amazing simplicity, even as those over here go up to Heaven to witness and enjoy His transcendent glory.

tāṉa nakarkaḷ talaicciṟantu eṅkeṅkum—
vāṉ, iṉ nilam, kaṭal-muṟṟum em māyaṟkē
aṉaviṭattum, eṉ neñcum tirukkaṭit-
tāṉa nakarum taṉa tāyap patiyē. (VIII–6–8)

Translation

This earth, the yonder Heaven. the Milk-ocean and other habitats
Are, no doubt, elegant and exhilarating, which my Lord befit
And yet, Tirukkaṭittāṉam, the holy city and my heart
Are just the ones, the Lord has chosen as His favourite spots.

Note

There are innumerable delectable centres here, there (Heaven) and elsewhere, which could regale the Lord. Still, Tirukkaṭittāṉam and the Āḻvār's heart are the only two regions, which the Lord feels compelled to enjoy and esteem, as devolving on Him as a matter of right.

tāyap patikaḷ talaicciṟantu eṅkeṅkum,
māyattiṉāl maṉṉi, vīṟṟiruntāṉ-uṟai,
tēcattu amarar tirukkaṭittāṉattuḷ,
āyarkku atipati, aṟputaṉ-tāṉē. (VIII–6–9)

Translation

Tirukkaṭittāṉam, the loving resort of even Celestials bright,
Is where the wondrous Chief of cowherds (Kaṇṇaṉ) alights,
With pleasure immense, looking upon it as the best
Of the pilgrim centres that do all over exist.

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Note

All pilgrim centers, without distinction of big and small are sacred indeed, and yet, the Lord covets Tirukkaṭittāṉam most, being the centre which enabled Him to gain access to the Āḻvār by exhibiting to the latter His grandeur as well as grace galore, His amazing simplicity.

aṟputaṉ, nārāyaṇaṉ, ari, vāmaṇaṉ,
niṟpatu-mēvi iruppatu eṉ neñcakam—
nal pukaḻ vētiyar nāṉmaṟai niṉṟu atir
kaṟpakac cōlait tirukkaṭittāṉamē. (VIII–6–10)

Translation

'Tis only to stay lovingly in my heart, His ultimate abode,
Nārāyaṇaṉ, Who is also Ari and Vāmaṇaṉ, the wondrous Lord,
Stands in Tirukkaṭittāṉam, with lovely orchards,
Where the celebrated brahmins reside,
Chanting the Vedas four, for ever and aloud.

Note

In order to gain access to the Āḻvār, the Lord came down to Tirukkaṭittāṉam and stood there. Once He got on to His destination, the Āḻvār's heart-centre, He would stay there only all the time.

cōlait tirukkaṭittāṉattu uṟai tiru-
mālai mataḻ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ col
pālōṭu amutu aṉṉa āyirattu ip pattum
mēlai vaikuntattu iruttum-viyantē. (VIII–6–11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the thousand delicious songs,
Gracefully composed by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ, adoring
The Lord Who resides in Tirukkaṭittāṉam, abounding
In orchards many, will the chanters thereof elevate
Unto the exalted Heaven with delight great.

Notes

(i) These ten songs will, by themselves, elevate their chanters to the high Heavens, on the ground that the Lord shall

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not brook separation from them even for a trice. This, of course, means that the Lord will be greatly delighted to hear these songs and, in the exuberance of His joy, instantly lift the chanters up to His heavenly abode.

(ii) The songs relate the glory of the great Lord and their author is no less than His most beloved Saint Nammāḻvār. The text, in the original, says that these songs are delicious like the milk porridge (rice boiled in milk and neatly spiced); the Lord constitutes the milk and the Āḻvār's songs, the other ingredients, put together—a delightful combination of diction and subject-matter and manner of expression.

Eighth Centum–Seventh Decad (VIII-7) (Iruttum, viyantu)

Preamble

The bliss enjoyed by the Āḻvār in this decad, stands on a pedestal of its own. It can even be asserted that there is no comparable decad in the whole hymnal.

When one pauses and ponders which indeed is the greater of the two pulls, namely, the Lord's effort to get at the Āḻvār and the Āḻvār's desire to get at Him, it will be seen that the Lord exerts the greater, naturally, the stronger pull, His desire to get at the subject, His coveted belonging, being supreme. Did He not declare, in His 'Song Celestial', that the gnostic, who knows Him truly, is undoubtedly responsible for His very existence and that it is very hard to find a truly discerning devotee who looks upon Him as everything, the highest goal, the Sole Means, Father, Mother, Friend. Refuge, Resting place etc.? It is, therefore, abundantly clear that the Lord considers it His greatest gain to reclaim a Jīva (individual soul) and, to this end, He goes on preparing the ground, all the time. His intense longing to get at the individual Soul is virtually the copper plate, establishing His right of ownership over the subject, sought to be reclaimed. And, therefore, the Lord mingles with the Āḻvār with such an inordinate longing. Noticing this, the Āḻvār realises with a stinging sense of shame that he had tried to reverse the role by begging of the Lord for his redemption

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overlooking the fact that it was the Lord who was all along been the supplicant for the Āḻvār's love unto Him. The Āḻvār acknowledges in this decad with great feeling the enormous love bestowed by the Lord on the individual Soul, as the indefatigable cultivator of God-love in the latter.

iruttum, viyantu eṉṉait taṉ poṉ aṭikkīḻ, eṉṟu
aruttittu, eṉaittu ōr pala nāḷ aḷaittēṟku,
poruttam uṭai vāmaṇaṉ tāṉ pukuntu, eṉ-taṉ
karuttai uṟa, vīṟṟiruntāṉ-kaṇṭu koṇṭē. (VIII–7–1)

Translation

Vāmaṇaṉ, my Lord, Whose grace I invoked, days on end,
To lift me unto His golden feet, has, I find,
Been very Keen Himself to get hold of me and now come
Right inside me, looking at me, all the time.

Note

The Āḻvār was beseeching the Lord all along, panting and craving for Him, to come and reign in his heart. This was indeed superfluous for the Lord is even more enamoured of the Āḻvār and He has, all the time, been looking forward to getting hold of the Āḻvār and being firmly lodged in his heart. And now, He has got inside the Āḻvār and He keeps looking at him with doting love, like unto a father who keeps looking at his beloved son, just recovered from a dire disease generally known to be fatal. As a matter of fact, the Āḻvār has survived the deep yearning of his, in VIII-5 (Māyakkūttā) to which he could have as well succumbed. Even as the Lord, as Vāmana, sought out Mahābali and snatched away his possessions, the Lord sought the Āḻvār and took over from him, his deep longing, and with a longing of even greater intensity, He took hold of the Āḻvār and got inside him.

iruntāṉ kaṇṭukoṇṭu-eṉatu ēlai neñcu āḻum
tiruntāta ōr aivarait tēyntu aṟa, maṉṉi;
perum tāḷ kaḻiṟṟukku aruḷceyta perumāṉ
tarum tāṉ aruḷ-tāṉ iṉi yāṉ aṟiyēṉē. (VIII–7–2)

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Translation

The Lord's grace unto the elephant, with feet large,
Does in my eyes no longer loom large,
For standing within me, firmly lodged,
He has worn down to naught the cruel senses five,
Which had kept my fickle mind in their grip tight
And He now keeps gazing at me, all the time.

Notes

What the Lord did unto the Āḻvār was to destroy his formidable opponents, the five senses and wean him away from their mischief by exhibiting His charming beauty.

In the case of Gajendra, the elephant, it was, no doubt, a long and grim struggle but it was just an encounter with a single crocodile, as against the five crocodiles, the five formidable senses, the Āḻvār was pitted against. And then, the venue was a mere pond in the case of Gajendra, whereas it was the vast ocean of Samsāra in which the Āḻvār was caught up. Again, Gajendra's struggle with the crocodile lasted a bare thousand years, while the Āḻvār's grim battle with life went right through a staggering past. Further, the Lord has got right inside the Āḻvār and keeps on looking at him with the same avidity with which a pauper from generations, keeps gazing at his new-found treasure. It has been said in Rāmāyaṇa that, after Śrī Rāma befriended Sugrīva, the monkey king, the two of them used to sit gazing at each other with insatiable joy, days on end. There at least, it was a sort of mutual pact, what could be termed as complimentary roles. In the case of the Lord's help to the Āḻvār, however, it was all one-sided with no obligation on the Āḻvār. All these go to enhance the Lord's grace unto the Āḻvār mani-fold and make the Lord's succour of Gajendra, the elephant, pale into insignificance.

aruḷ-tāṉ iṉi yāṉ aṟiyēṉ; avaṉ eṉ uḷ,
iruḷ-tāṉ aṟa, vīṟṟiruntāṉ; itu allāl,
poruḷ-tāṉ eṇil, mūvulakum poruḷ alla:
maruḷ-tāṉ ītō? māya mayakku mayakkē? (VIII-7-3)

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Translation

Indeed, I know of no grace but that of the Lord.
Who does inside me stay, dispelling the darkness within;
It seems I am unto Him the sole concern,
He values not so much even His overlordship of the three worlds,
Is it yet another mystery of His or a mere illusion?

Notes

Overwhelmed by the immensity of the Lord's love unto him, the Āḻvār feels it to be too good to be true and even suspects that it might be just an illusion.

In the preceding song, the Āḻvār deemed it an incomparable act of grace galore, on the part of the Lord to have subjugated his unrelenting senses and destroyed them. But now, he says even that dwindles down before the loving condescension with which He has got Himself lodged in the Āḻvār's heart, dispelling its erstwhile darkness. What is more, the Lord's condescension is full and complele, seeing that, in His boundless love for the Āḻvār, He has relegated even His overlordship of the Universe to a secondary place. In his unique diction, Nampiḷḷai puts it, that the Āḻvār says here "Alas! the Lord had kept me in a state of bewilderment all along, caught up in the vortex of 'Prakṛti' (Māyā) and now again, He keeps me bewildered by His extra-ordinary love unto me."

māya mayakku mayakkāṉ, eṉṉai vañcittu;
āyaṉ, amararkku ariēṟu, eṉatu ammāṉ
tūya cuṭarccōti taṉatu eṉ uḷ vaittāṉ—
tēcam tikaḻum taṉ tiruvaruḷ ceytē. (VIII–7–4)

Translation

The Divine Cowherd of limitless glory, even Celestials can't comprehend,
Has unto me displayed His grace galore of universal fame,
His resplendent Form immaculate, He has in my heart planted firm,
A solid reality this is and not an illusion, as I did apprehend.

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Note

The Āḻvār is now quite clear in his mind, that the Lord is really regaling in his heart and avers that it is a matter beyond doubt. As a matter of fact, in His unbounded love for the Āḻvār, the immaculate Lord has set His dazzling feet, dispelling darkness and distress, inside the Āḻvār, keeping all the worlds spell-bound by this act of grace galore. Surely, He would not play ducks and drakes with His devotees and bewilder them, as He did in the case of the ungodly Duryodhana and others of his ilk.

tikaḻum taṉ tiruvaruḷ ceytu, ulakattār
pukaḻum pukaḻ tāṉ atu kāṭṭit tantu, eṉ uḷ
tikaḻum maṇik kuṉṟam oṉṟē ottu, niṉṟāṉ;
pukaḻum pukaḻ maṟṟu eṉakkum ōr poruḷē? (VIII–7–5)

Translation

Nothing more praiseworthy do I deem than the grace radiant,
Shed by the Lord, gleaming inside me like an emerald mount
And revealing to me the praises of the inhabitants
Of the worlds, heaped on Him, on this account.

Note

" Is there indeed anything more praise-worthy than this super-abundant grace of the Lord in standing within me firmly, gleaming like an emerald mount? ", asks the Āḻvār, Again, this grace is twice-blest, in that the Lord feels exultant over the bestowal of His grace on the Āḻvār and the latter is also bubbling with jubilation over his being the object of the Lord's extra-ordinary love. And yet another phase, the third one is the chorus of praise sung by all the worlds for this act of grace galore on the part of the Lord and what is even more impressive is the revelation of this fact to the Āḻvār by the Lord Himself.

poruḷ maṟṟu eṉakkum ōr poruḷ-taṉṉil cīrkkat
tarumēl, piṉṉai yārkku avaṉ taṉṉaik koṭukkum-
karu māṇikkak kuṉṟattut tāmaraipōl
tiru mārpu, kāl, kaṇ, kai, cevvāy untiyāṉē? (VIII–7–6)

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Translation

If the Lord, whose winsome chest and other limbs
Do a cluster of lotus flowers blooming on emerald mount resemble,
Were on me to bestow lesser gains, short of He Himself,
Is there at all any other to whom He will give of Himself?

Notes

(i) There are two broad groups of the Lord's votaries, namely, those who ask of Him boons like acquisition of wealth, freedom from rebirth and so on, while those in the other group seek none but the Lord Himself. The Āḻvār falls in the latter group, no doubt, and yet, if the Lord has given Himself unto the Āḻvār, it is because of His inordinate love for the Āḻvār and not because there are no other like-minded votaries in that group.

(ii) The enchanting description of the Lord's exquisite charm, as set out, in detail, in the original text of this song, does not stem so much from the Lord's natural charm as from the extra lustre and grandeur imparted to His whole Form, limb by limb, by His union with the Āḻvār.

(iii) Reference to the lotus flowers blooming on the crest of an emerald mount is a grand piece of poetic imagery, flight of poetic fancy.

cevvāy, unti, veṇ pal, cuṭark kuḻai tammōṭu
evvāyc cuṭarum tammil muṉ vaḻāyk koḷḷa,
cevvāy muṟuvalōṭu eṉatu uḷḷattu iruṇṭa
avvāy aṉṟi, yāṉ aṟiyēṉ maṟṟu aruḷē. (VIII–7–7)

Translation

The Lord's mouth red, the navel, the teeth sparkling white,
The earlobes with pearls bedecked and all other limbs bright
Do vie with each other to attract me all right,
But I can think of nothing but the grace of the Lord Who stays
In my heart with beaming smile which on His red lips plays.

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Note

Although the Lord's limbs vie with each other in casting their fascinating spell on the Āḻvār in whose heart the Lord is now lodged, His bewitching smiles, revealing His great delight in mingling with the Āḻvār, are said to attract him most. Consequently, his mind is solely fixed on these ravishing smiles and the Lord's unique grace. Like unto the flower in fresh bloom, the Lord's radiant smile illumines His entire Form, limb by limb.

aṟiyēṉ maṟṟu aruḷ; eṉṉai āḷum pirāṉār
veṟitē aruḷceyvar, ceyvārkaṭku ukantu-
ciṟiyēṉuṭaic cintaiyuḷ, mūvulakum taṉ
neṟiyā vayiṟṟil koṇṭu, niṉṟoḷintārē. (VIII–7–8)

Translation

I know of no other benefaction but the stay of the Lord.
Within my frail heart, keeping in His stomach all the three worlds,
Well *in tact*; unto those of His choice, He, who has me enthralled,
Does His grace solely extend, out of His own accord.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār expatiates on the Lord's sweet, spontaneous grace (nirhetuka krupā) inasmuch as the grace, with which He has now flooded him, is itself a matter of such voluntary grace. The Lord of the universe has shifted the venue of His vast governance to the heart-region of the Āḻvār. What else is this but the Lord's spontaneous grace and is there at all any need to adduce any other example? In this song, the Āḻvār thus pin points the Lord's spontaneous grace, extolling the Lord as one, who sheds His voluntary grace on those whom He singles out for such favours and has thus chosen to get Himself firmly lodged in the Āḻvār's mind. While the Āḻvār looks upon himself, as the lowliest of the lowly, the Lord regards him as one far more precious than all the worlds put together.

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(ii) In the hymns of the Āḻvār where the Lord's grace is expounded there might appear to be mutual contradictions in some places to the superficial reader, but a critical and cogent study will remove such doubts. This position has been thrashed out in aphorisms 393 and 394 of "Śrīvacana Bhūṣaṇam"; the reader is invited to study either the original text or the English rendering thereof by the author of this work.

vayiṟṟil koṇṭu niṉṟoḻintārum, evarum,
vayiṟṟil koṇṭu niṉṟu, oru mūvulakum tam
vayiṟṟil koṇṭu niṉṟavaṇṇam niṉṟa mālai,
vayiṟṟil koṇṭu, maṉṉa vaittēṉ-matiyālē. (VIII–7–9)

Translation

The Lord, Who, in His stomach, holds with no effort,
The earthly rulers who, in their stomachs, keep their subjects,
The exalted Celestials and the worlds three,
I have consented to get firmly inside me.

Notes

(i) To a question, doggedly put to him, suggesting that there ought to be some merit in him for the Lord to bestow on him His grace, of such a magnitude, the Alvar says that the only merit in him is his passive quiescence or mere non-resistance to the influx of His grace. To those sticklers who have a fad for bargaining and would, therefore, insist upon making the influx of the Lord's grace contingent upon some kind of intiative in us, the Āḻvār's own utterances should serve as the eye-opener. Even this consent to the Lord's reclamation is induced by the Lord's grace. Therefore it is, this hymnal is replete with expressions like: "Oh, Sire, You have lifted me unto Your holy f et, after duy moulding and reconditioning my mind, so as not to stifle your effort to redeem me". See also the elucidation in aphorism 110 of 'Ācārya Hrudayam'.

(ii) By the earthly kings holding, in their astomachs, their subjects, is meant the protection extended by the

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former to the latter like unto the mother feeding the babe inside her womb. The Lord's retention, in His stomach, of the exalted Celestials and all the worlds with their contents, also denotes His role, as the universal Protector, a function which He discharges through a mere fraction of His resolve.

vaittēṉ matiyāl eṉatu uḷḷattu akattē;
eyttē oḷivēṉ allēṉ eṉṟum, eppōtum-
moytiu ēy tirai mōtu taṉ pāṟkaṭaluḷāl
paittu ēy cuṭarp pāmpu-aṇai nam paraṇaiyē. (VIII–7–10)

Translation

The Lord, who has the hooded serpent bright,
As His somnolent bed on the cool, milk ocean,
With surging waters, I have got fixed in my heart,
Suffer shall I no more from pangs of separation.

Note

Mere passive quiescence on the part of the Āḻvār has resulted in the Lord entering him, with all His retinue. Naturally, this has infused in the Āḻvār robust confidence that he shall no more suffer from the pangs of separation from the Lord.

cuṭarp pāmpu-aṇai nam paraṇai, tirumālai,
aṭic cērvakai vaṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
muṭippāṉ coṉṉa āyiratu ip pattum caṉmam
viṭat tēyntu aṟa nōkkum-taṉ kaṇkaḷ civantē. (VIII–7–11)

Translation

These songs ten, out of the thousand of Kurukur Caṭakōpaṉ,
Whose natural bent it is to adore, ever and anon,
The feet of Tirumāl, Who does on the radiant serpent recline,
Aimed at the complete severence of his moorings earthly,
Will grind to a halt the chanters'cycle of birth and rebirth,
Looking on it [as it were] with red eyes [spitting deadly poison].

Notes

(i) As stated in what is known as 'Paryaṅka Vidyā, in the Upaniṣad, the Lord, seated on the serpent cushion,

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along with Mahālakṣmī in that glorious setting, grants audience to the 'Muktas' (Released Souls) on their reaching Heaven. This very setting is alluded to in the opening line of this song as in the original, in keeping with the benefit accruing to the chanters of this decad as set out in this song, namely, release from the bondage of Samsāra and the terrific cycle of birth and rebirth. These ten songs, by themselves, deliver the goods, looking as it were, at the worldly ties of the chanters of these songs, with red eyes, spitting poison, so as to effectively destroy these ties and put the chanters in Heaven.

(ii) The Āḻvār's ultimate goal is the Lord's pair of feet where he longs to render incessant service, rather than the heavenly bliss, as such.

Eighth Centum—Eighth Decad (VIII-8) (Kaṇkaḷ civantu)

Preamble

In the fifth decad of this centum (Māyak kūttā), the Āḻvār's yearning was too deep for words. The Lord responded with even greater avidity and the two of them got wrapt up in mutual delight. The Āḻvār gave vent to his jubilation in the last decad, and even so, in the eighth song of that decad, he referred to himself as a frail being, with whom the great Lord of unlimited prowess has chosen to mingle freely and stay on. The Āḻvār's frightful sense of his own pettiness, in contra-distinction to the Lord's grandeur of limitless dimensions, which was rearing up its head now and then, was studiously kept under effective check by the Lord who was apprehensive of the Āḻvār's tendency to shrink back from Him on this score. The Lord, who noticed, with great concern, a revival of this trend in the Āḻvār, wished to cut it out, there and then, root and branch. The Lord wanted to quell the Āḻvār's notion of the soul's pettiness by revealing to him its real grandeur. But then, the soul, like unto a mere glow-worm, may not hold out any appeal to the Āḻvār, profoundly struck by the Lord's exquisite charm. The other alternative for the Lord

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was to exhibit the grandeur of the Āḻvār's soul along with that of His own. The Lord accordingly revealed to the Āḻvār, His charm first and then the grandeur of the Āḻvār's soul, in its relation of liegeship to the Sovereign Lord, as delectable unto Him as His ornaments. And so, in this decad, the Āḻvār dwells on the intrinsic beauty of the soul, as the exclusive vassal of the Lord, as revealed by the Lord Himself.

kaṇkaḷ civantu periyavāy, vāyum civantu kaṇintu, uḷḷē
veṇ pal ilaku cuṭar, ilaku vilaku makara kuṇṭalattaṉ,
koṇṭal vaṇṇaṉ, cuṭar muṭiyaṉ, nāṉku tōḷaṉ, kuṇi cārṅkaṉ,
oṇ caṅku katai vāḷ āḻiyāṉ, oruvaṉ-aṭiyēṉ uḷḷāṉē. (VIII–8–1)

Translation

The cloud-hued Lord of grandeur unique, with eyes, red and wide,
Reddened lips, teeth sparkling white, imposing pearl pendants,
Beaming crown, shoulders four, curvate bow, lovely conch, the sword,
The mace and discus majestic, stands, inside this vassal, resplendent.

Notes

(i) In this song, the Āḻvār goes into raptures on beholding the Lord's exquisite Form displaying the rare charm acquired by Him on His union with the Āḻvār. In VIII-5-2, the Āḻvār was with eyes fully dried and lips parched up, when he beseeched the Lord to oblige him with His sweet presence. The Lord too had undergone such modifications then and He was also off colour and lack-lustre like the Āḻvār! It was only when His union with the Āḻvār materialised, that He regained His original complexion and composure, heightened by the extra lustre imparted by the exuberance of His joy in the coveted company of the Āḻvār. The Āḻvār, who took due note of this marvellous reciprocity on the part of the Lord, got choked down to a trance state, as he meditated on the Lord's amazing simplicity and boundless love for him. This was the third and the

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last spell of suspended animation, passed through by the Āḻvār, who was struck dumb and insensate every time he contemplated the Supreme Lord's extreme simplicity in bringing Himself down on a par with His devotees and some times, even relegating Himself lower still. Every time, this trance-state lasted six months, as seen from aphorism 58 of 'Ācārya Hrudayam' and Śrī Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi's glossary thereon; the two earlier stages pertain to I-3-1 and V-10-1.

(ii) The description of the Lord and His mighty weapons, (which in the eyes of the Āḻvār loom, more as lovely jewels decorating the Lord) is that of the rejuvenated Lord, on His getting lodged in the Āḻvār's heart. This could also fit in with line 2 of Śrīman Nāthamuni's śloka, 'Yadgosahaśraṁ apahanti.....', in adoration of Saint Nammāḻvār, as per the former's yogic comprehension. There it has been said that the Bakula-flowered (Narcissus) Nammāḻvār is the Sun, beaming through the thousand rays of Tiruvāymoḷi, where Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa resides, wielding His discus and conch and surrounded by His entire retinue, the region adored by the Brahmins learned in the Śrutis, the cynosure of the Celestials. (See also Introduction).

(iii) What the Āḻvār envisaged within him was like unto what meets one's eyes when a box full of sparkling diamonds is thrown open.

aṭiyēṉ uḷḷāṉ; uṭal uḷḷāṉ-aṇṭattu akattāṉ, puṟattuḷḷāṉ,
paṭiyē itu eṉṟu uraikkalām paṭiyaṉ allaṉ, paramparaṉ,
kaṭicēr nāṟṟattuḷ ālai iṉpat tuṉpak kaḷi nērmai
oṭiyā iṉpap perumaiyōṉ, uṇarvil umpar oruvaṉē. (VIII–8–2)

Translation

The One, who does within me (His vassal) dwell,
Stays in this body, as well, being the Inner Soul
Of the worlds, one and all and the regions beyond, as well;
Of fragrance unique and sweet like flawless honey is His bliss perennial,

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Higher than the highest, none can His modes fathom,
He is the One, of knowledge supreme.

Note

The Āḻvār has high-lighted, in this song, 'śeṣatva' or exclusive service to the Lord, as the essential attirubute of the individual soul. Instead of saying that the Lord, Who pervades all things all over the worlds and the regions beyond (the external multiplicity of layers), stays within him and his body, he says, the Lord stays in this vassal (aṭiyēṉ) and the body (uṭal) as well. *The Āḻvār has thus identified his soul. as the servant (vassal) of the Lord, thereby bringing to the fore, the 'Śeṣatva' (servanthood) attribute of the Soul.* Although the word 'aṭiyēṉ' (self) occurs in various other songs of the Āḻvār and even in the very first song of his first hymnal (Tiruviruttam), it has connoted, in all other places, the embodied soul and not the soul, as such.

Of the two principal attributes of the Individual soul, namely, 'Jñātrutva' (bliss of wisdom or knowledge) and 'śeṣatva' (service to the Lord), why should the latter alone be taken as the essential attribute of the soul, in preference to the former? This has been examined at great length in aphorism 73 of 'Śrīvacana Bhūṣaṇam'. It is reproduced below.

If 'Jñātrutva' is held to be the sole attribute of the soul, this is also the attribute of the Lord and hence it is necessary to bring out the distinguishing feature of the individual soul. If, on the other hand, 'Śeṣatva' is held to be the sole attribute of the soul, this attribute is applicable to 'Acit' (non-sentient matter), as well, and it cannot, therefore, be the distinguishing feature of the soul. And so, both the attributes of the 'Jīva' (soul), namely, 'Jñātrutva' and 'Seshatva' are attracted. We now come back to the question, as to which of these two should be considered the essential attribute of the soul. Could it be 'Jñātrutva', which stamps out the soul from the unintelligent matter or 'Śeṣatva' which differentiates 'Jīva' from 'Īśvara' (Lord)? 'Śeśatva' or service unto the Lord, being that which sustains the individual soul and makes it thrive, this attribute naturally comes to

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the fore, relegating the other attribute to the back-ground. The assumption of ' Jñātrutva ', as the essential attribute of the ' Jīva ', would place it on a par with the Lord and this smacks of ' Advaita ' or non-difference between the two entities. This is effectively quelled by the ' Śeṣatva ' aspect of the ' Jīva '. When this topic came up for discussion in Saint Rāmānuja's holy court of religious discussions, the Saint, although perfectly informed in the matter, wished to get it expounded by his Guru, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi. Kūrattāḻvāṉ, the illustrious disciple of Saint Rāmānuja, was sent, all the way to Tirukkottiyur to learn from Nampi the truth, in this regard. Even after waiting on Nampi for six long months, Āḻvān could not obtain from the grea preceptor, any hint. But, when he sought Nampi's permist sion to return to Srīrangam, the latter condescended, at long last, to pin-point the truth admirably, by pointing out: " Son, don't you know that Saint Nammāḻvār, inspired and endowed by the Lord Himself with perfect knowledge, has said ' *Atiyēṉ uḷḷāṉ* ' (*the opening words of this song*)? " Grasping at once the implication of this, Āḻvāṉ exclaimed with joy, " Good Sire, I am indeed blessed, I have known the truth " and returned to his Master at Srirangam. The exact import of these two words has already been set out in sub para above.

uṇarvil umpar oruvaṇai avaṇatu aruḷāl uṟaṟ poruttu, eṉ
uṇarviṉ uḷḷē iruttiṉēṉ-atuvum avaṇatū in aruḷē;
uṇarvum, uyirum, uṭampum, maṟṟu ulappilaṇavum, paḻutēyām
uṇarvaip peṟa, ūṟṟu, iṟa ēṟi, yāṉum tāṉāy oḻintāṉē.

(VIII–8–3)

Translation

To get at the overlord of the celestials of knowledge profound,
I did His grace invoke, impounding Him in my thoughtful desires;
Even this act of mine was by His sweet grace ordained,
Getting inside me thus, He did make me wholly averse
To the earthly moorings, body and soul, pleasures sensual
And allied knowledge; He did unto me fully reveal

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The essential nature of the soul, as His exclusive vassal,
Who can't, apart from Him, remain viable.

Note

By His spontaneous grace, the Supreme Lord made the Āḻvār God-bent and also revealed unto him, the true nature of his Soul, in order to stabilise his God-love, to the exclusion of everything else. The true nature of the Soul, as belonging to the Lord, as His exclusive vassal, and remaining but His mode, His very body, was discolosed to the Āvḷār so that he shall not shrink back from Him, any longer.

yāṉum tāṉāy oḷintāṉai-yātum, evarkkum muṉṉōṉai—
tāṉum, civaṉum, piramaṉum ākip paṇaitta taṉimutalai-
tēṉum, pālum, kaṉṉalum, amutum ākit tittittu, eṉ
ūṉil, uyiril, uṇarviṉil niṉṟa oṉṟai-uṇarntēṉē. (VIII–8–4)

Translation

Realised have the one unto whom I stand indissolubly bound;
My soul, which does thro' my body, spirit and intellect extend,
Is His body, delectable unto Him like honey, milk, candy and nectar,
To things and beings, one and all, He is anterior,
The Primate unique, who did the Trinity compose and stand
Alongside Civaṉ and Piramaṉ, whose functions He ordained.

Note

The Lord has now made the Āḻvār aware of the fact that his soul is indeed extremely delectable to Him. No doubt, all things and beings, with different forms and names, were ushered in by Him alone, and yet, in the process, He pursued different modes of operation. The ungodly and those not bent towards Him were created solely in the light of their past actions; Brahmā, Rudra and other Devas, hankering after wealth and power, were assigned positions where they could wield such power and command wealth; in the case of the Āḻvār, however, He demonstrated unto him the fact of his soul being exclusively His, highly enjoyed by Him, thereby making him realise that he is not apart

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from Him, being but His body, an attribute to Him, as whiteness is to a white wall or white cloth. Prior to the dawn of this knowledge, the individual relished the soul as his own and now he relishes the soul as the Lord's, even as the Lord lavishes his affections on it as His attribute.

niṉṟa oṉṟai uṇarntēṉukku, ataṉ nuṇ nērmai-atu itu eṉṟu—
oṉṟum oruvarkku, uṇaralākātu; uṇarntum, mēlum kāṇpu-aritu;
ceṉṟu ceṉṟu, paramparam āy, yātum iṉṟit tēyntu aṟṟu,
naṉṟu, tīṭu eṉṟu aṟivu-aritāy, naṉṟāy ñāṇam kaṭantatē.
(VIII–8–5)

Translation

The subtle beauty of the Soul, eternal and intelligent, the Lord's attribute,
None can comprehend, in terms concrete, as this or that
And much less visualise; 'tis indeed very much apart
From matter and does its components, one by one, excel;
One can't with things material compare and tell,
'Tis good or bad and yet He did reveal
Unto me, in its true perspective, my soul.

Note

In the opening song of this hymnal (I-1-1), the Āḻvār acknowledged the fact that he had been graciSoulsy endowed by the Lord with knowledge, full and complete. Knowledge of his soul, its characteristics, sepecial features and inter-relation with the Lord etc., would have doubtless been imparted to him then, as part of the vast range of that knowledge. The emphasis, however, rested on God-love (matinalam) and all that knowledge acquired by the Āḻvār got rooted in it. (Bhaktirūpāpanna Jñāna). The Āḻvār did not, therefore, turn his attention to the study of his soul, as such, a mere firefly, compared with the splendour of the Supreme Lord. It has, however, become necessary now for the Lord to impress upon the Āḻvār the grandeur of his soul and its glorious impact on Him, in the particular context, explained in the preamble to this decad. The Lord has now condescended to exhibit the soul as His mode, that is, one related to Him, as the predicate is to the subject or attribute

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is to substance. Even the wisest and the best informed individuals, with the most strenuous mental effort (yoga) or psychic meditation, cannot perceive this wonderful entity, the soul (Ātmā) not comparable with the external objects, with form and content, discerned by the senses. The soul transcends the several vestures veiling it, which could be grouped as 'body' (annamaya) or as the senses, 'prāṇa' or the vital spirit (Prāṇamaya) or 'manas' (manomaya), the mind, or 'buddhi', the will. Not falling within the mischief of the modifications and corruptions to which all these are subject, the soul is very subtle and distinct from any of these, not cognisable as 'good' or 'bad', being outside the purview of sense-knowledge. Neither by speech nor by any process of thought would it be possible to disclose the true nature of the soul in its entirety, even by those who have made great advance in spiritual knowldge. c.f. what the Lord said to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita. "To know, to see and to enter into the true nature of the soul is difficult". The soul is thus, by itself, a unique entity (truth), characterised by its own special attributes of intelligence (Jñāna) and bliss (ānanda).

As the illustrious Ācārya Empār would put it, in the preceding songs, the soul was referred to as an appendage to the Lord, His dependent, an attribute (viśeṣaṇa), the Lord being the substance (viśeṣya); in the four songs commencing from this one, the soul is dealt with as a singular entity, characterised by its own attributes of intelligence (Jñāna) and bliss (Ānanda).

naṉṟāy ñāṉam kaṭantupoy, nal intiriyam ellām īrttu, (tu, oṉṟāykkiṭanta arum perum pāḻ ulappu il-ataṉai uṇarntu uṇarnceṉṟu āṅku, iṉpat tuṉpaṅkaḷ ceṟṟuk kaḷaintu, pacai aṟṟāl, aṉṟē appōtē vīṭu; atuvē vīṭu-vīṭāmē. (VIII–8–6)

Translation

If one can the cruel senses discard, going well beyond. The sense-objects and the sprawling domain of matter transcend,

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Discern the soul as a distinct entity and its true nature comprehend,
Abjure, with all one's heart, the fruits of actions, good and bad,
There and there lies the realisation of the soul from bondage freed.

Note

The Āḻvār sets out here the enormous effort needed for the perception of one's soul, dissociated from its material moorings, through the Yogic practices, aimed at the conquest of the senses etc. The practicant has to discern, first of all, the soul as a separate entity, apart from the inert natter with which it is intricately wound up, like oil in seeds, fire in wood etc. The next step will be to get oneself weaned away from the sensual pleasures, the Prakṛti or matter-oriented desires, which are little better than one aspiring for a rich harvest in a vast desert area, a huge waste land, non-cultivable and, therefore, lying fallow. Even after giving up the inert matter as unavailing, the acts giving rise to the fruits, know as 'Puṇya' and 'Papa' will get one stuck up in worldy life. Therefore, these should also be given up with no chance of their revival, by striking at the roots and cutting out the age-long propensities and the odours driven underground. The soul, thus released from bondage, could, unless the practicant was short-sighted, merely looking upon such emancipation as the final goal, be steeped in the eternal service of the Lord without let or hindrance, the destined goal. The other alternative will be to get lost in self-enjoyment, the disembodied soul enjoying itself, without turning its attention on the service of the Lord. Of course, this alternative which the Āḻvār has elsewhere, in this hymnal, referred to as a great disaster, is indeed farthest from his mind.

atuvē vīṭu; vīṭupēṟṟu iṉpam tāṉum atu; tēṟi,
etuvē tāṉum paṟṟu iṉṟi, yātum ilikaḷ ākiṟkil,
atuvē vīṭu; vīṭupēṟṟu iṉpam tāṉum atu; tēṟātu,
etuvē vīṭu? ētu iṉpam? eṉṟu eyttār-eyttār, eyttārē. (VIII–8–7)

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Translation

The vision thus gained, of the soul, the Lord's attribute,
Freed from worldly desires and material contacts, does constitute
True emancipation and the bliss which from it accrues;
Those, who are about this not clear and get confused,
Will for ever remain so, "asking what is heaven and heavenly bliss?"

Note

The Āḻvār affirms that this and this alone (the *modus operandi*, indicated in the preceding song) is the way to achieve self-realisation and the bliss resulting therefrom. Attempts made, in any other manner, will not fructify. It is only through a total abandonment of all desires passing in one's mind, except the desire for the 'Ātman' (Self, forming the Lord's attribute), with no chances of their sprouting again, one is said to be steady in the knowledge of the Self (Bhagaved Gita II-55). With a mind steadied in this manner, the vision of the soul is acquired and such an acquisition is, however, worthless, if it does not hinge upon the service of the Lord, in keeping with the essential nature of the soul.

eyttār, eyttār, eyttār eṉṟu, illattārum puṟattārum
moyttu, āṅku alaṟi muyaṅka, tām pōkumpōtu, uṉmattarpōl
pittē ēṟi, anurākam poḻiyumpōtu, em pemmāṉōṭu
ottē ceṉṟu, aṅku uḷḷam kūṭak kūṭiṟṟākil-nal uṟaippē.
(VIII–8–8)

Translation

One has indeed to steer clear of all temptations,
The spurt of desires and fix the mind, in great devotion,
On the Lord during those lingering, last moments
Of one's life, when friends and relations gather around and lament,
Wailing aloud, "oh, he is gone! he is gone! he is gone!"
With their minds agitated, like unto madmen.

Note

The Āḻvār stresses here the importance of meditation on the Lord, with absolute calm and clarity, during the last moments

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of one's life, when the whole scene is so tense and bewildering, what with the wanton wailing of the relatives and friends and the terrible off-chance of a sudden spurt of all suppressed desires and unrealised ambitions. It is noteworthy that even stanzas four to eight of this decad, which deal with the characteristics of the 'Jīva' (Individual Soul) are rooted in the 'Śeśatva' (servanthood) aspect of the soul. The Āḻvār is indeed grateful to the Lord for such revelation.

kūṭirrākil, nal uṟaippu; kūṭāmaiyaik kūṭiṉāl,
āṭal-paṟavai uyar koṭi em māyaṉ āvatu; atu atuvē;
vīṭaip paṇṇi, oru paricē, etirvum nikaḻvum kaḻivumāy
ōṭit tiriyum yōkikaḷum uḻarum-illai allarē. (VIII–8–9)

Translation

It will be good, no doubt, if there can be a blend
Of the soul with the Super-Soul but it will be a notion blind,
That the soul could itself become the Lord with the flying bird
On His banner, oh, what a grotesque misfit indeed!
Pity! there exist such perverts gross, at all times, who wallow
In family ties, with all fanciful notions of the final goal.

Notes

(i) Meditation of the Lord during the last moments of one's life, emphasised by the Āḻvār in the preceding song, stresses incidentally the basic difference between the two entities, namely, the 'Jīva' (individual soul) and 'Paramātmā' (Īśvara, the Supreme Lord). Unfortunately, there are perverts, extant in this world at all times, who propagate fanciful notions that the individual soul, rid of nescience, becomes 'Brahman' and thereafter, there is but a single entity, namely, 'Brahman', the other entity, the 'Jīva' having ceased to exist, as such. The Āḻvār now condemns such heresies.

(ii) If the impossible happens, that is, the incompatibles blending into one, as in the fanciful event of the individual soul and the Super-Soul (the Supreme Lord) blending into a single entity, the Āḻvār wonders what a

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grotesque and preposterous misfit it would turn out to be. The individual soul can then be the Master of Garuḍa, the Eternal Hero and fly on him. But this cannot be, flying on Garuḍa being the sole prerogative of the Lord. It is indeed a pity that there have been in the past, there are at present and there will be in the future, persons expoun. ę such heretical doctrines according to their individual fancies.

uḷarum illai allarāy, uḷarāy illai ākiyē,
uḷar-em oruvar: avar vantu eṉ uḷḷattuḷḷē uṟaikiṉṟār:
vaḷarum piṟaiyum tēy piṟaiyum pōla, acaivum ākkamum,
vaḷarum cuṭarum iruḷum pōl, teruḷum maruḷum māyttōmē.
(VIII–8–10)

Translation

Unto His devotees He can never cease to be and does always subsist
While, unto others, He is not, though He does always exist;
Such a unique Lord does in my heart now subsist,
And in me knowledge clear prevails, with no fluctuation
Like the Moon waxing and waning, darkness and sunshine.

Note

The Āḻvār rejoices that the Lord, who enthralled him by exhibiting His auspicious traits, exquisite beauty and cosmic wealth, has now entered his heart, dispelling all doubts and discrepancies to which the perverts succumb and infusing in him knowledge, steady and sound, unlike the fluctuating fortunes of the Sun and the Moon. The solar day is followed by the dark night while the Moon waxes for some time and then wanes. The Āḻvār's knowledge of the Divine is, however, not subject to such fluctuations, rise and fall.

teruḷum maruḷum māyttu, taṉ tiruntu cempoṉ kaḷal aṭikkīḻ
aruḷi iruttum ammāṉām, ayaṉām, civaṉām tirumālāl
aruḷap paṭṭa caṭakōpaṉ ōr āyirattuḷ ip pattāl
aruḷi, aṭikkiḻ iruttum nam aṇṇal karumāṇikkamē. (VIII–8–11)

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Translation

The Lord of sapphire hue will bless and under His feet retain
The chanters of these songs ten out of the unique thousand of Caṭakōpaṉ,
Blest by Tirumāl (Lord Supreme), Who inside Ayaṉ and Civaṉ stays
As their Internal Controller, infuses knowledge, firm and sound, and takes
His devotees unto His victorious feet, with lovely anklets of gold bedecked.

Note

All knowledge that militates against God-love and God-enjoyment will be rooted out and unalloyed knowledge of the Divine infused in the chanters of this decad by the Supreme Lord who discharges the triple functions of creation, sustentation and dissolution, the first and last being got done by Brahmā and Rudra, Himself standing within them as their Internal Controller. What more? They shall be lifted by Him unto His lovely feet, without being allowed to bow unto others and fall at their feet.

Eighth Centum—Ninth decad (VIII-9) (Karu māṇikka malai)

Preamble

This decad is spelt out by a mate of Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī (Āḻvār, figuratively turned into a female lover). In the entire hymnal, there are three decads of this type and this is the last of the series, the two earlier ones being IV-6 and VI-5. In IV-6, the mate advised the elders, gathered around Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, who were treading the mis-guided path of invoking minor deities to cure the Nāyakī's malady, to desist from their wrong methods and smear the Nāyakī's body with the dust from the feet of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas. In VI-5, it may be recalled, the mates pointed out to the elders, the futility of their trying to extricate the Nāyakī, completely absorbed in the Deity at Tolaivillimaṅkalam, having committed the initial mistake of

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taking her to that pilgrim centre and then brought her face to face with the Deity there.

The background of this decad is, as follows:

Seeing that Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī (Āḻvār) has come of marriageable age, the parents make known to the folks in the town their intention to get her married to an eligible bachelor. Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī is, however, fiercely steeped in the Supreme Lord. As a matter of fact, she has already had secret contacts with the Lord, enshrined in KuṭṭanāṭṭuTiruppuliyūr (Kerala State), of which her parents were not aware. The mate, who enjoys the Nāyakī's confidence, however, knew about it from the change wrought in the Nāyakī's person and the manner of her talking, but she was afraid of inviting the wrath of the elders upon herself, in case she publicised the truth about the Nāyakī. At the same time, if the truth was not revealed to the elders, they might go ahead with the unwholesome project of getting the Nāyakī married off locally to some one and embarrass poor Nāyakī who might keep reticent out of shyness. Caught thus, in the horns of a dilemma, the mate hits upon a via-media to tide over the situation. The mate makes it appear that she has just got to know about the Nāyaki's affair with the Lord at Kuṭṭanāṭṭu. Tiruppuliyūr and points out to the elders that, in view of this development, it would no longer be feasible for them to pursue their former plans. This brings to the fore the Nāyakī's inalienability from the Lord to whom she stands totally dedicated as the object of His exclusive enjoyment. Thus, the essential nature of the soul, as set out in the last decad, gets crystallised still further in this decad.

It deserves to be noted that, enlightened by the Lord about the soul's grandeur as His vassal, highly delectable to Him, the Āḻvār is mighty jubilant, to the point of being turned into the feminine state (Nāyakī). The Āḻvār, thus transformed, highlights the current mood of the Nāyakī, her total dedication to the Lord as His exclusive vassal in the esoteric sense, adopting the theme as above. In fact, this is the solitary decad in the entire hymnal, where the Nāyakī gives vent to her joy, indirectly though. In all other decads reflecting the Nāyakī stance, she is in a state of extreme discomfiture due to the immediate non-fulfilment of her particular longing.

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karu māṇikka malaimēl maṇit taṭam tāmaraik kāṭukaḷ pōl,
tirumārvu, vāy, kaṇ, kai, unti, kāl, uṭai-āṭaikaḷ ceyya pirāṉ,
tirumāl, emmāṉ, ceḻu nīr vayal kuṭṭanāṭṭut tiruppuliyūr
aru māyaṉ pēr aṉṟip pēccu ilaḷ, aṉṉaimīr!-itaṟku eṉ ceykēṉō?
(VIII–9–1)

Translation

She utters not anything but the holy names
Of the wondrous Lord, difficult to attain, Who remains
In Kuṭṭanāṭṭu Tiruppuliyur, abounding in fields fertile,
Like unto lush forests which with large lotus flowers bristle,
Blooming over the crest of a mount of dark ruby, His lips lovely,
Chest, eyes, hands, feet, navel and robes, being red, one and all;
Ye, elders, I know not what I can do for her, at all.

Notes

(i) The mate says that the Nāyakī cannot fix her mind on anything else, having been enthralled by the exquisite beauty of the Lord enshrined in Tiruppuliyūr in Kuṭṭanāṭu (present Kerala State) and she keeps on uttering His names alone. This pilgrim centre is one of the thirteen centres, sung by the Āḻvārs, in Kerala State. There is another pilgrim centre bearing the same name in the territory comprised in the former Cōḷā Kingdom (now Tamil Nāḍu), called Cōḷa Nāṭṭu Tiruppuliyūr. The pilgrim centre covered by this decad, is, therefore, distinctly mentioned as Kuṭṭanāṭṭu Tiruppuliyūr.

(ii) There is nothing like a dark ruby, ruby being only red. And yet, the Āḻvār has used this expression, as poetic imagery, to project the picture of the Lord of bluish complexion, of generous dimensions, whose chest bearing the Divine Mother (Mahālakṣmī), lips, hands, navel, feet and silken robes are all red. This exquisite charm would indeed be beyond the purview of our enjoyment but for His coming and staying in 'Arca' (iconic) manifestation, out of condescending love, induced by Mahālakṣmī, the Divine Consort.

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aṉṉaimīr! itaṟku eṉ ceykēṉ?–aṉi mēruviṉ mītu ulavum
tuṉṉu cūḻ cuṭar ñāyiṟum, aṉṟiyum pal cuṭarkaḷum pōl,
miṉṉu nīḻ muṭi, āram pal kalaṉ-tāṉ uṭai emperumāṉ
puṉṉai am poḻil cūḻ tiruppuliyūr pukaḻum ivaḷē. (VIII–9–2)

Translation

Ye, elders, What can I do, if this lady stands lost in admiration
Of Tiruppuliyūr, abounding in lovely gardens, where remains
The Lord with the crown resplendent, garland and jewels many
Beaming like the glorious sun that on lovely mount Mēru rises
And the grand galaxy of stars luminous?

Note

The mate goes on repeating, "what can I do for this lady's condition?" just to impress upon the elders that she was not a party to this involvement of the Nāyakī and that it was a sudden development, of which neither she nor they had any inkling. Besides uttering the Lord's holy names, the Nāyakī is said to be all praises for Tiruppuliyūr which abounds in fertile fields and lovely gardens. She could also describe in detail, the Lord's beaming person, His crown, garland and jewels shining like the grand assembly of all luminous bodies; surely, this throws sufficient light on her intimate contact with the Deity over there.

pukaḻum ivaḷ niṉṟu irāppakal-poru nīrkkaṭal tīp paṭṭu, eṅkum
tikaḻum eriyoṭu celvatu oppa, ceḻum kaṭir āḻi mutal
pukaḻum poru paṭai ēnti, pōr pukku, acuraraip poṉṟuvittāṉ,
tikaḻum maṇi neṭu māṭam nīṭu, tiruppuliyūr vaḻamē.
(VIII–9–3)

Translation

This lady keeps praising the grandeur, day and night,
Of Tiruppuliyūr, where stand castles tall in lustrous array,
And stays the Lord wielding lovely weapons such as the discus bright,
Who to battle went, like the surging sea set ablaze,
Moving along with flames around, and did the Asuras rout.

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Note

Here is another grand poetic imagery, the Lord of bluish tint entering the battlefield, wielding the dazzling discus and other weapons of rare excellence, being likened to the blue sea set ablaze, moving about with flames all around. Even as Sītā locked herself up in the sweet embrace of the great warrior, Śrī Rāma, the Vīra Rāghava Who stood victorious in front of her, after vanquishing, single-handed, the entire horde of Rākṣasās in janaṣ·āna, numbering as many as fourteen thousand, in an amazingly short period, Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī is now all admiration for the warrior in Tiruppuliyūr and keeps on recounting His great prowess. This gives yet another clue to the mate about the Nāyakī's engrossment with that Deity. Even as Sītā lavished all her affections on Ayodhyā, in preference to Mithila, her birthplace, the Āḻvār is all praises for Tiruppuliyūr, giving Tirunakari, his birthplace the go-by.

ūr vaḻam kiḻar cōlaiyum, karumpum, perum cennelum cūḻntu,
ēr vaḻam kiḻar taṉ paṇaik kuṭṭanāṭṭut tirappuliyūr
cīr vaḻam kiḻar mūvulaku uṇṭu, umiḻ tēva pirāṉ
pēr vaḻam kiḻarntaṉṟip pēccu iḻaḻ, iṉṟu-ip puṉai-iḻaiyē.
(VIII–9–4)

Translation

This dame with jewels bedecked, these days,
Recounts, with no respite, the holy names,
That bespeak the glory great of the Lord Who gulped down
And spat the worlds three, Who stays
In Kuṭṭanāttu Tiruppuliyūr, full of lovely gardens
And rich crops of sugarcane and paddy, amid fields fertile.

Note

Lost in admiration of the enchanting environments of Tiruppuliyūr, the Nāyakī goes on describing its fauna and flora, the rich fields with extensive cultivation and all that with great delight. And then, goes into raptures over the role of the Deity there, as the great Protector of the entire universe and talks about it, days on end, in a manner very much out of the ordinary run. As she speaks on with

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great zest, she brightens up and looks exceedingly charming, as if she is bedecked with jewels. The mate is led to conclude from the Nāyakī's speech and comportment that she has had contacts with the Deity at Tiruppuliyūr.

puṉai iḷaikaḷ aṉivum, āṭai uṭaiyum, puṟukkaṇippum
niṉaiyum nīrmaiyatu aṉṟu iv:ṭku; itu niṉṟu niṉaikkappukkāl,
cuṉaiyiṉuḷ taṭam tāmarai malarum taṉ tiruppuliyūr
muṉaivaṉ, mūvulaku āḷi, appaṉ tiru-aruḷ mūḷkiṉaḷē.
(VIII–9–5)

Translation

The way this lady bedecks herself and dresses up
And the amorous glow on her if one pauses to look up,
One can discern, ' tis beyond comprehension [in terms earthly],
Bathed she must have been in the grace lovely,
Of the Sovereign Master of all the worlds, reigning supreme
In cool Tiruppuliyūr in whose ponds lotus flowers are in full bloom.

Note

The mate is gradually getting into the thick of the subject, by way of adducing incontrovertible evidence of the Nāyakī's involvement with the Deity at Tiruppuliyūr, in order to convince the Nāyakī's mother, still bent upon binding her daughter to the earthly home and heart' . The mate's initial suspicion about the Nāyakī's intimacy with the Deity at Tiruppuliyūr gets confirmed on three counts, namely, (i) the manner in which the jewels are worn by the Nāyakī at present, differs from that in which they were worn before, revealing the fact of their having been interferred with by some one else, removed and put back on her person; (2) her clothes also bear evidence of similar interference, and (3) the wholesome change in her complexion and comportment like unto the parched-up-land getting flushed with a copious supply of water, turning it lush and green. These are, as the mate puts it to the Nāyakī's mother, unmistakable indications of the Nāyakī's love affair with the Lord, which the mother should also take due note of. It is indeed impossible to reclaim the Nāyakī, drowned in the ocean of the Lord's grace.

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tiru-aruḷ mūḷki, vaikalum ceḻu nīr-niṟak kaṇṇa-pirāṉ
tiru-aruḷkaḷum cērntamaikku aṭaiyālam tirunta uḷa;
tiru-aruḷ aruḷāl avaṉ ceṉṟu cēr taṉ tiruppuliyūr
tiru-aruḷ kamuku oṉ paḷatiatu-melliyal cevvitaḷē. (VIII–9–6)

Translation

This lady's lips are glowing red like the arecanut fruit,
Which by the Lord's grace thrives in cool Tiruppuliyūr, His favourite resort;
This is a sure sign indeed that she remains immersed for ever
In the sweet grace of Kaṇṇapirāṉ of oceanic colour.

Note

The arecanut trees in Tiruppuliyūr do not thrive on water but are fed by His grace. If the Nāyakī's lips are also red like the arecanut fruits of that place, it only shows that she is also the recipient of His sweet grace. According to her mate, there are very many indications of her revelling in His grace, since long. Her reddened lips, with a special glow, not so pronounced before, the aftermath of her union with the Lord, put the whole matter beyond all doubt.

mel ilaic celva vaṉ koṭip pulka, vīṅku iḷam tāḷ kamukiṉ
mal ilai maṭal vāḻai īṉ kaṉi cūḻntu, maṇam kamaḻntu,
pul ilait teṅkiṉūṭu kāl ulavum taṉ tiruppuliyūr
mallal am celvak kaṇṇaṉ tāḷ aṭaintāḷ-im maṭavaralē.
(VIII–9–7)

Translation

It seems this young lady has attained the bounteous feet
Of the Lord in cool Tiruppuliyūr where plays the southerly breeze
Amid cocoanut groves and ripe bunches of plantains waft fragrance sweet
And lovely betel creepers nestle the mature, sturdy arecanut trees.

Note

"Even the inanimate things of Tiruppuliyūr live in close amity, moving hand in gloves; in such a glorious setting, the Nāyakī

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would appear to have mingled with the presiding Deity of the place and got on very well with Him, " says the mate unto the elders.

maṭavaral aṉṉaimīrkaṭku eṉ collic collukēṉ?-mallaic celva
vaṭamoḷi maṟaivāṇar vēḷviyuḷ ney aḷal vāṉ pukai pōy
tiṭa vicumpil amarar nāṭṭai maṟaikkum taṉ tiruppuliyūr
paṭa aravu-aṇaiyāṉ taṉ nāmam allāl, paravāḷ ivaḷē.
(VIII–9–8)

Translation

What shall I tell you, elders, about the felicity of this damsel?
She utters not anything but the holy names of the Lord,
Who does on hooded serpent recline in Tiruppuliyūr cool,
Whence the fumes of the ritualistic fire lit by Vedic scholars grand,
Fed by ghee, right up to the sky, ascend
And envelop the home of the celestials in the region beyond.

Notes

(i) " The Nāyakī would appear to have been attracted by the vedic rites and rituals, in full swing, in Tiruppuliyūr and gone in union with the presiding Deity of the place." says the mate. The mate is not in a position to say anything more about the Nāyakī. Could it be said that the Nāyakī was subservient to her mate or that the mate was also a party to the excesses committed by the Nāyakī or that the Nāyakī defied her mate and got out of hand? No, none of these and the mate could do nothing better than writhing her hands disconcertingly. It is indeed surprising that the Nāyakī should describe, without any reserve, the very bed she shared with her Lord, overlooking the fact that her mate was standing beside.

(ii) It is noteworthy that the Āḻvār, who is the author of the Tamil vedas, got attracted by the rituals performed according to the Sanskrit Vedas. These rituals of the Sanskrit Vedas propitiate the Lord, in His ' Antaryāmi ' aspect, residing in all things and beings as the Internal Controller but not visible to the naked eye. The

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hymns of the Tamil vedas aim at service unto the Lord, in His 'Arca' or worshippable Form, being sung in front of Him, to His great delectation.

paravāḷ ivaḷ niṉṟu, irāppaṛkal-paṇi nīr niṟak kaṇṇa-pirāṉ
viravu ār icai maṟai vētiyar oli vēlaiyiṉ niṉṟu olippa,
karavu ār taṭamtoṟum tāmaraik kayam tīvikai niṉṟu alarum
puṟavu ār kaḻaṉikaḷ cūḻ tiruppuliyūrp pukaḷ aṉṟi, maṟṟē.
(VIII–9–9)

Translation

This young lady sings, day and night, nothing but the glory
Of Tiruppuliyūr where bloom bright lotus flowers in sweet array,
In huge ponds with crocodiles infested and the chantings sweet
Of the vedic brahmins, like unto the roaring of the sea, reverberate,
The cloud-hued Lord Kaṇṇapiāṉ's favourite seat,
Surrounded by fields many of fertility great.

Note

The Nāyakī speaks of nothing but Tiruppuliyūr, the exquisite form of the Lord ens rined there, the vedic chantings of the devotees over there and the lush fields and luscious fruits in plentiful supply. The mate avers that this clearly points to the Nāyakī's involvement with the Deity over there.

aṉṟi, maṟṟōr upāyam eṉ, ivaḷ amtaṇ tuḻāy kamaḻtal—
kuṉṟa mā maṇi māṭa maḻikaik kōlak kuḻāṅkaḷ malki,
teṉ ticait tilatam purai kuṭṭanāṭṭut tiruppuliyūr
niṉṟa māyaṇ pirāṉ tiruvaruḷām ivaḷ nērpaṭṭate ? (VIII–9–10)

Translation

The aroma of tuḻaci, cool and nice, on this lady reveals
Her contact gracious with the wondrous Lord in that crest jewel
Of southerly direction, Tiruppuliyūr, where stand castles tall
In cluster grand; what other reason can I, for this, tell?

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Note

The mate now adduces yet another evidence which conclusively establishes the fact of the Nāyakī's contact with the Lord at Tiruppuliyūr. The fragrance of tulaci, the Nāyakī's person exudes, is the tell-tale, betraying her contact with the Lord, who wears the aromatic tulaci garland on His crown, chest and shoulders. " Could there at all be any other reason for this special aroma on the Nāyakī's person? ", the Mate emphatically asks.

nērpaṭṭa niṟai mūvulakukkum nāyakaṉ-Taṉ aṭimai
nērpaṭṭa toṇṭar toṇṭar toṇṭar toṇṭaṉ caṭakōpaṉ col
nērpaṭṭa tamiḻ-mālai āyirattuḷ ivai pattum
nērpaṭṭār-avar nērpaṭṭār-neṭumārku aṭimai ceyyavē.

(VIII–9–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten
Out of the choice thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṉ,
The vassal of the vassal of the Sovereign Master's vassals' vassal,
Will for His loving service become truly eligible.

Notes

(i) The chanters of this decad are assured of the attainment of the final goal, namely, eternal service unto the Lord. The Āḻvār describes himself as the vassal unto him that stands last in the long chain of the Lord's devotees, steepep in His loving service. Evidently, this sets the pace for the decad, that immediately follows, highlighting service unto the Lords' devotees as the highest goal.

(ii) It has to be noted that this song refers to the Lord, the Sovereign Master of the entire universe, the essential nature of the individual ṣoul as the humblest servant of the devout, the excellence and potentiality of the hymnal expounding the Lord's greatness and the ultimate benefit devolving on the chanters of this decad.

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Eighth Centum—Tenth Decad (VIII-10)
(Neṭumāṟku aṭimai)

Preamble

The subject's exclusive dependence on the Supreme Lord was emphasised in the last decad. But then, dependence on the Lord could extend upto the Lord's devotees as well by virtue of His unbounded love for them. This is like our wearing on our heads, the holy sandals of the Lord and swallowing the water obtained by giving them a sacramental bath. Did not Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār declare in VIII-10-3 of his ' Periya Tirumoḻi ' that, as a result of learning the eight-syllabled Tirumantra, he became a vassal of the devotees of the Lord, enshrined in Tirukkaṇṇapuram? Service unto the Lord's devotees, the logical culmination of service to the Lord (which is implied in the word ' namaḥ ', occurring in Tirumantra), is dealt with, in this decad. Actually, the end-song of the last decad has already set the pace for this decad. No doubt, the essential nature of the soul, with special emphasis on servanthood (śeṣatva), as the Lord's vassal, extending upto the Lord's devotees, was set out, as far back as III-7 ' Payilum Cuṭaroḻi '. We, however, see in this decad, the Āḻvār intensely longing for the fulfilment of such service, constituting the final goal. Being the liege unto the Lord's favourite apostles and Saints on Earth is deemd to be a greater virtue, carrying to greater value than direct allegiance to the Lord Himself. In ' Īṭu ', mention has been made of an anecdote, shedding copious light on this topic. Ammuṇi Āḻvāṉ, a disciple of Sri Parāśara Bhaṭṭar was greeted, as follows, by the illustrious master, on the former's return to Srirangam from his sojourn in the Hoysala country (Mysore):

" Son, we learn with great pleasure about the service you have rendered, during your sojourn in those parts, to the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, over there. In keeping with your spirit of service unto the Lord's devotees, you richly deserve a discourse from me on ' Neṭumāṟ-kaṭimai ', the decad of Tiruvāymoḻi, bearing on this very aspect. "

The Āḻvār ends up this decad by praying unto the Lord, that this passionate longing of his to serve the Lord's devotees should endure till the end of time and it should also be instilled in all those associated with him, generation after generation.

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neṭumāṟku aṭimai ceyvēṉpōl avaṉaik karuta,vaṉcittu,
taṭumāṟṟu aṟa tīkkatikaḷ muṟṟum tavirnta; catir niṉaintāl,
koṭu mā viṉaiyēṉ avaṉ aṭiyār aṭiyē kūtumitu allāl,
viṭumāṟu eṉpatu eṉ, antō!-viyaṉ mūvulaku peṟiṉumē?
(VIII–10–1)

Translation

If even the mere thought of simulating service unto the Lord,
Who for His devotees bears love immense, could truly rid
Me of all my cruel sins, unknown to me, can this sinner great
Give up service unto His devotees, at their lovely feet?
Need I say, except this, I would reject outright all else
Be it even a gift unto me of all the worlds immense?

Note

If the mere wish of the Āḻvār, with hardly any semblance of sincerity to serve the Lord, could surely blot out all his deadly sins, that very moment, without his being aware of the whole process how much more beneficial could whole-hearted devotion to His apostles be? This is how the Āḻvār revolved, in his mind, seeing that the Lord bears inordinate love for His devotees and service unto His devotees would, therefore surely please Him much more than direct service unto Him. If the Āḻvār were to choose between service unto the Lord's devotees on the one hand, and possession of the combined wealth of all the three worlds devolving on him as an unconditional gift on the other, he would not set his eye on the latter but firmly stick to the former; the latter stands no comparison whatever with the former.

viyaṉ mūvulaku peṟiṉum, pōytāṉē tāṉē āṉālum,
puyal mēkampōl tirumēṉi ammāṉ puṉai pūm kaḻal aṭikkīḻc
cayamē aṭimai talainiṉṟār tiruttāḻ vaṇaṅki, immaiyē
payaṉē iṉpam yāṉ peṟṟatu uṟumō-pāviyēṉukkē ? (VIII–10–2)

Translation

Neither sovereignty over the sprawling worlds three
Nor enjoyment of one's self, freed from bondage, can equal the bliss,
This sinner has attained, of adoring the feet lovely

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Of the self-less devotees in the vanguard of service
Unto the cloud-hued Lord bedecked with lovely flowers and anklet victorious.

Notes

(i) Even the combined gift of vast wealth and the 'Kaivalya' state of perennial freedom from bodily ties, cannot equalise the bliss of service at the holy feet of the self-less apostles of the Lord, His hot favourites.

(ii) The self-enjoyment, referred to, in the second line, is the 'Kaivalya' state, denoted by the phrase in the first line of the original text of this song, "self becoming self". The self in family bondage, cannot enjoy itself, having to be in the midst of the family members, sharing their weal and woe. If it attained Heaven and partook of the bliss of eternal service unto the Lord, it has to be in the company of the glorious attendants over there and once again, there is no scope for solitary enjoyment of one's own self. And so, the phrase in question could denote only the 'Kaivalya' experience or enjoyment of itself by the emancipated soul, in disembodied state. Although this is an eternal state, the Āḻvār would not regard it as the ultimate value (Puruṣārta) worth coveting, rather, he shuns it all along.

uṟumō pāviyēṉukku-iv ulakam mūṉṟum uṭaṉ niṟaiya
ciṟu mā mēṉi nimirtta eṉ centāmaraikkaṇ tirukkuṟaḷaṉ
naṟu mā virai nāḷ-malar aṭikkīḻp pukutal; aṉṟi, avaṉ aṭiyār,
ciṟu mā maṉicaṟāy eṉṉai āṇṭār, iṅkē tiriyavē ? (VIII–10–3)

Translation

Would it be appropriate if I did attain
The lotus feet, of fragrance sweet, of the lotus-eyed Lord,
Who did His midget form expand and pervade
The worlds three, all at once, seeing that there remain
In this abode, His devotees great, the '*little-big*' men,

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Who did redeem me, and my mind I can't turn
On anything but unremitting service unto them?

Notes

(i) Having abjured wealth and 'Kaivalya Mokṣa' in the two preceding songs, the Āḻvār now asserts that even service unto the Supreme Lord has to be given the go-by, overwhelmed, as he is, by service unto the '*little-big*' men (as in the original text), over here, which is virtually an enlargement of service unto God. The 'little-big men', an apparent contradiction in terms, refers to the great apostles of profound knowledge but with frail bodies, who move about, in this harrowing world, and propagate the gospel of God-love. Here is an interesting anecdote, in elucidation of this extra-ordinary phrase. When Kūraṭāḻvāṉ was reciting this stanza within the hearing of his son Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the latter, a mere boy, was curious to know how the diametrically opposite qualities of littleness and bigness could inhere in one and the same individual. When the young lad sought of his erudite father, clarification in this regard, the latter appreciated the query but expressed his inability to illustrate the position in the light of the Vedic truths, which could not be inculcated in the boy, at that stage, when he had not yet had the spiritual initiation through 'upanayana', the sacred investiture ceremony. The learned father, however, found it handy to bring home to the boy the import of the expression in question through concrete examples of the great devotees, profound scholars like Ciriyāccāṉ, Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ, Empār Aruḷāḷapperumāḷ Emperumāṉār etc., possessing frail bodies.

(ii) It might be recalled that the Āḻvār was earlier under the irresistible spell cast by the enthralling beauty of Lord Vāmanā but now he switches on to the service of the devotees subjugated by Vāmana's exquisite charm.

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iṅkē tirintēṟku iḻukku uṟṟu eṉ-iru mā nilam muṉ uṇṭu, umiḻnta,
ceṅkōlatta pavaḷavāyc centāmaraikkaṇ eṉ ammāṉ
poṅku ēḻ pukaḻkaḷ vāya āy, pulaṅkoḷ vaṭivu eṉ maṉattatu āy,
aṅkuēy malarkaḷ kaiya āy, vaḻipaṭṭu ōṭa, aruḷilē? (VIII–10–4)

Translation

What would be wrong indeed, if I abjured heaven
And stayed on, in this abode, my tongue spelt out
The radiant glory of the lotus-eyed Lord with lovely lips, who gulped down
All the worlds once and then spat them out,
I did in my heart implant His form exquisite
And my hands worshipped Him with choice flowers,
In the foot-steps of His devotees of great fervour?

Note

It is but meet that the 'caraṃa parva niṣṭā', that is, one who adores the Lord's devotees much to the delight of the Lord, should adore Him also for the gratification of the devotees. Matura Kavi Āḻvār, who knew no God other than Parāṅkuśa (Nammāḻvār), said, in the third stanza of 'Kaṇṇiṇuṇ Ciṟuttāmpu,', that there was nothing wrong in his adoring the cloud-hued Lord, for the delectation of Nammāḻvār, His staunch devotee. That song of his would appear to have been inspired only by this song of his master. The Āḻvār's tongue, which should sing the glory of the Lord's devotees, now sings His praise; his mind, where the devotees are to be enshrined, now holds the Lord and his hands which should offer flowers at the feet of the great apostles of the Lord, now place those flowers at His lovely feet. This does not, however, constitute any deviation from his arowed stance of being the vassal of His devotees (Bhāgavata seṣatva). Verily, it is but an extension of that, directed towards the pleasure of those devotees themselves, c.f. Śatrugna's devotion to Śrī Rāma, as but a corollary to the former's devotion to Bharata, by-or-means detracting from it. See also the elucidation in aphorism 127 of 'Ācārya Hrudayam'.

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vaḻipaṭṭu ōṭa, aruḷ peṟṟu, māyaṉ kōla malar aṭikkīḻc
cuḻipaṭṭu ōṭum cuṭarccōti veḷḷattu iṉpuṟṟu iruntālum,
iḻipaṭṭu ōṭum uṭaliṉil piṟantu. taṉ cīr yāṉ kaṟṟu,
moḻipaṭṭu ōṭum kaviamutam nukarcci uṟumō-muḻutumē?
(VIII–10–5)

Translation

Were I blest by the wondrous Lord to render service eternal
At His lotus feet lovely, in the yonder land supernal,
With its whirling splendour in spate and rejoice, would it at all equal
The rapturous rapport with the devout,
Singing in their holy company, the songs nectarean that sprout,
From the sweet contemplation of the Lord's qualities great,
Albeit possession of the meanest of bodies is my lot?

Note

The Āḻvār is gradually working up the unique bliss of service unto the Lord's apostles and Saints and holding a rapport with them, before which even the bliss of eternal service in the yonder Heaven, resplendent with the stream of whirling radiance at the lotus feet of the Lord of transcendent glory, pales into insignificance. In the earlier songs, possession of the wealth of all the three worlds and self-enjoyment in a disembodied state after final emancipation from bodily bondage, have been discarded as insignificant nothing, in comparison with the glory of service unto the Lord's devotees. The Āḻvār does not mind acquiring the meanest of bodies if that would not hamper the joy of his experiencing the Lord's glory and transmitting it in the form of sweet songs to be sung in the company of the holy men over here. Feeding the devotees with such songs, providing real nourishment to them, is an important facet of service unto the devotees. It is, therefore, very appropriate that this aspect finds mention in this decad.

nukarcci uṟumō mūvulakiṉ vīṭu pēṟu-taṉ kēḷ il
pukarc cem mukatta kaḻiṟu aṭṭa poṉ āḻikkai eṉ ammāṉ,
nikarc cem paṅki eri viḻikaḷ nīṇṭa acurar uyir ellām
takarttu, uṇṭu, uḻalum puḻ-pākaṉ, periya taṉi māp pukaḻē?
(VIII–10–6)

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Translation

Will the prowess great, astounding cosmic wealth and sovereignty
Of the Lord, my Sire, sporting the ring lovely
And flying (Garuḍa) the bird, smart and lively,
Who slew the majestic elephant peerless, red with rage,
And did the red-haired Asuras hefty, with fiery eyes, flay,
Stand any comparison with the supreme bliss
Of contemplation of the vast array of His attributes peerless?

Note

This song is but a follow-up of the immediately preceding song, amplifying the idea conveyed therein. The bliss of contemplation of the Lord's peerless glory, finding expression through such scientillating hymns, is indeed an experience so great that, before it, even the Lord's own happiness resulting from His Sovereignty and might, cosmic wealth etc., pales into insignificance.

taṉi māp pukaḻē eṉṉāṉṟum niṟkum paṭiyāt tāṉ tōṉṟi,
muṉi māp pirama mutal-vittāy, ulakam mūṉṟum muḷaippitta
taṉi māt teyvat taḻir aṭikkīḻp pukutal aṉṟi, avaṉ aṭiyār
naṉi māk kalavi iṉpamē nāḷum vāykka-naṅkaṭkē. (VIII–10–7)

Translation

May we the supreme bliss of communion enjoy, for ever,
With the devout, setting aside even the rapport with the Lord Supreme,
Of peerless glory, the first cause of one and all, Who did usher
By a mere resolve, all the worlds of incomparable fame,
That shall, true to vedic dictum, endure the test of time!

Notes

(i) Here is a case of the Āḻvār wanting to reach the farthest limit of God-enjoyment, culminating in rapturous rapport with His devotees (these virtually taking the place of God) and abiding in it, for all time.

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(ii) The Lord's peerless glory referred to here, is His extraordinary grace in thinking of resuscitation of the Universe, lying dormant in a subtle state, without distinction of name and form and putting it back on its feet, Himself being the triple cause (material, operative and instrumental) for such an evolution. The chief merit of this creation is the opportunity it provides unto the creatures to exhibit their gratitude unto their Creator, the great Benefactor, by seeking His lotus feet, as their sole refuge. In the present context, the Āḻvār's ultimate goal, however, extends up to the devout who thus seek refuge at the Lord's lovely feet and it is the incessant communion with these Vaiṣṇavas (Lord's ardent devotees) that the Āḻvār avidly longs for.

nāḻum vāykka naṅkaṭku-naḻir nīrk kaṭalaip paṭaittu, taṉ
tāḻum, tōḻum, mutikaḻum, camaṉ ilāta pala parappi,
nīḻum paṭar pūṅ kaṟpakak kāvum, niṟai pal nāyiṟṟiṉ
kōḻum, uṭaiya maṇi maḻaipōl kiṭantāṉ tamarkaḷ kūṭṭamē.
(VIII–10–8)

Translation

May we for ever behold the assembly grand, of the apostles great,
Of the Lord, who lay on the cool oceanic waters He did create,
With outstretched feet, shoulders and crowns, many and matchless,
Like unto an emerald mount, abounding in crawling orchids
And gardens fine, beaming with the radiance of Suns in myriads.

Note

Nothing more is needed, the Āḻvār now says, than even the mere sight of the grand congregation of the Lord's self-less devotees, steeped in the enjoyment of His enchanting Form, as described herein. Creating, first of all, the vast expanse of water, the Lord lay on it with perfect ease, stretching out His numerous feet, shoulders and crowns, like unto an emerald mount abounding in lovely orchards in repose.

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tamarkaḷ kūṭṭa valviṉaiyai nācam ceyyum catu mūrtti,
amar koḷ āḷi, caṅku, vāḷ, vil, taṇṭu āti pal paṭaiyaṉ,
kumaraṉ, kōḷa aiṅkaṇai vēḷ tātai, kōtu il aṭiyār-tam
tamarkaḷ tamarkaḷ tamarkaḷām catirē vāykka–tamiyēṟkē.
(VIII–10–9)

Translation

May this vassal, left alone amidst the worldlings, be blest
With the bliss of service unto the vassal, who stands last
In the grand chain of the blemishless devotees of the Lord,
Who did unto Manmata, perennial youth and exquisite charm impart,
Who the militant weapons, conch, discus, sword, bow etcetera does wield
And, with His might unique, rids the enemies tough of the holy band.

Notes

(i) The Lord destroys *en masse* the entire band of those tough enemies of His devotees. It could also mean destruction of the obstacles confronting the band of devotees as a group or the destruction of the cluster of evils, as and when they crop up.

(ii) Even the proverbial youth and handsomeness of Manmata, the deity reputed to be a paragon of beauty, are imparted unto him by the Lord, who is 'Manmata Manmata'

(iii) Three types of devotees have been mentioned in stanzas 2, 9 and 10 of this decad. In the category of those *exemplary devotees to whom service of the Lord is an end in itself*, alluded to in the 2nd stanza, falls Bharata; in the category of *blemishless devotees who are absolutely selfless*, mentioned in this song, is included Śatrugna, while, in the next category of the *inseparable devotees* who can't brook separation from the Lord, Lakṣmaṇa is right in the vanguard. Likewise, here Āḻvār and his associates stand on a pedestal of their own, well apart from the mad pursuits of the worldlings.

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vāykka tamiyēṟku ūḻitōṟu ūḻi ūḻi–mā kāyām—
pūk koḷ mēṉi, nāṉku tōḷ, poṉ āḻik kai, eṉ ammāṉ
nīkkam illā aṭiyār–tam aṭiyār aṭiyār aṭiyār em
kōkkaḷ; avarkkē kuṭikaḷāyc cellum nalla kōṭpāṭē.

(VIII–10–10)

Translation

Those that stand last in the chain of the devotees inseparable,
Of the Lord of the lovely tint of lily blue, with shoulders four,
Who wields the discus bright, are unto me, my Masters sure;
May the desire keen to serve them wholly and for ever,
On me devolve and pass on to my clan, as a whole.

Note

The Āḻvār is very keen that such an ardent desire to serve the one that stands last in the long chain of the Lord's ardent devotees, should not stop with him alone but trickle down to those connected with him, generation after generation. The inseparable devotees, referred to, are those like Lakṣmaṇa, who longed to serve Lord Rāma, day and night, without respite, in all possible ways. (See also notes under VIII-10-9).

alla kōṭpāṭṭu ulakaṅkaḷ mūṉṟiṉuḷḷum ṭāṉ niṟainta
allik kamalak kaṇṇaṉai am taṇ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
collappaṭṭa āyirattuḷ ivaiyum pattum vallārkaḷ
nalla patattāl maṉai vāḻvar, koṇṭa peṇṭir makkaḷē.

(VIII–10–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the thousand uttered by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ,
Adoring the Lord with lotus eyes, large and lovely, who pervades
All the three worlds with wholesome creeds,
Will as householders flourish, with fervour great,
To serve unremittingly the Lord's devotees aright.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār invests all the three worlds with his remarkable fervour to serve the Lord's devotees, which has become,

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as it were, a creed with him. This is the wholesome creed with which he invests all the worlds also. As Śrī Nampiḷḷai puts it, the worlds settled down to orderly thinking, good conduct and behaviour, only after the Āḻvār sang this decad (Tiruvāymoḷi).

(ii) Far from getting vexed with the Āḻvār for his by-passing Him and getting into the domain of 'Bhāgavata-śeṣatva' (Service to His devotees), the Lord gazes at him in great wonderment, seeing that he pines for this creed of his to trickle down to his futur generations also. In the process, the Lord's eyes get widened further still, making them even more attractive than before and inviting the Āḻvār to take due note of it and give expression thereto in this end-song.

(iii) The benefit accruing to the chanters of this decad, as set out in this end-song, sounds rather queer. To get consigned to the life of a house-holder would seem like getting into some thing the Āḻvār has been abhorring all along, and detests in the very next decad (IX-I). The point to be emphasised here is, however, the merit attaching to 'Gṛhastāśrama', life as a virtuous house-holder, ably supported by members having the common objective of serving the devout with unremitting zeal and sincerity, such as that of Kūrathāḻvāṉ, Aṇaṇtāḻvaṉ and other savants. It is only family life which does not conform to this ideal, that needs to be condemned and eschewed. In 'Īṭu' there is, as usual, a juicy anecdote to reinforce the wholesome aspect of family life. The great Ācārya, Śrī Rāmānuja, set out on a pilgrimage to 'Aṇaṇtacayaṇam' (Trivandrum in Kerala State), accompanied by a large number of dis iples. On the way, they halted at the residence of Celva Nampi, an ardent devotee of remarkable excellence, (vide also the 11th stanza of Periyāḻvār's Tiruppallāṇṭu) at Tirukkoṭṭiyūr. Although Nampi was out of station, at that time, his equally devoted wife lavishly entertained Śrī Rāmānuja and his huge entourage, overjoyed at the voluntary arrival of so many 'Bhāgavatas' (devotees), all at once, an act of grace galore on their part. The

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household granary which was full of paddy, recently harvested, was pounded into rice, *in toto*, with great jubilation and all that rice was consumed by the venerable guests. On Celva Nampi's return home, he found the granary absolutely empty. Without the slightest disquietitude, the perfect hostess, his wife was, she asssured Nampi that their granary in Heaven should indeed be full. Let it be noted that this is the kind of household that has been vouchsafed by the benign Āḻvār to the chanters of this decad.

Toṇṭaṉūr Nampi, Eccān and a few other great savarts are also said to have dedicated their lives to the service of the devout (Bhāgavatas).

THE CENTUM, IN RETROSPECT: (DECAD-WISE SUMMARY)

(VIII-1) : In the concluding decad of the Seventh Centum, we saw how the Āḻvār was longing for the immense pleasure of singing these hymns (Tiruvāymoḻi) before the Divine Couple at Tiruvāraṇviḷai and rendering unto Them, other kinds of service, as well. But then, the project did not get off the ground and non-fulfilment of his cherished desire made the Āḻvār grow sceptical of the Lord's *bona fides and attributes*, mainly, His traits of loving condescension and ability to concede the wishes of His devotees. And so, we see him giving expression to his misgivings, *in the opening decad of this Centum*. Apprehending, however, that the Āḻvār, sunk in despair, under the delusion that all His auspicious traits have dried up, might collapse altogether, the Lord set at naught his doubts by calling upon him to ponder over all that He had done for him, so far and assuring him of the due fulfilment of whatever He intended to do further for him. Thus consoled, the Āḻvār feels elevated from his erstwhile depression;

(VIII-2) : Although the Āḻvār's misgivings were cleared up, in the last decad, he was still not happy because of his inability to achieve the external perception of the Lord's exquisite charm and physical contact, longed for, by him. This gave rise to yet another doubt in his mind, whether the Omniscient Lord still discovered in him traces of worldly desires and was, therefore, holding back. And so, the Āḻvār vindicates, *in the second decad*, his absolute detachment from all things ungodly, fiercely concentrating on the Lord, with no other thought crossing his mind. But then, he does this, not by means of a direct dialogue with the Lord but through argumentation between him, turned as Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki and the mates and elders;

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(VIII-3) : The Āḻvār could not lift his mind off the vision of the Lord's exquisite Form of spectacular grandeur, conjured up by him in VIII-2-10 and, therefore, he voices forth *in the third decad* his apprehension of the safety of the Lord who moves about, in all His heavenly splendour, alone and unaided in this wicked world, peopled by the ungodly and the selfish. In the exuberance of his God-love, the Āḻvār loses perspective of the sequence of time; he would like to move about as the Lord's camp-follower, carrying His bows and arrows; he is anxious that the turbulent child, who slept in the cradle under Yaśodhā's nose and is now reposing, as a tender Babe, containing all the worlds in His stomach, on a tender fig-leaf, over the vast expanse of water, with none to attend on Him, should not fall asleep and slip down, into the deep waters; seeing the Lord, in His Iconic manifestation, in a reclining posture in quite a few pilgrim Centres, the Āḻvār thinks that He is relaxing Himself after His strenuous endeavours, such as spanning all the worlds, setting His tender feet over hill and dale, rubbles and brambles etc, and offers to massage His shoulders and feet. Above all, he feels vexed, with his loneliness, not finding yet another, in the whole world, sharing his anxiety in this regard. Towards the end of the decad, we find that the Lord has set the Āḻvār at ease, by convincing him that there was hardly any room for such fears and made him regain his composure, cured of his erstwhile fears;

(VIII-4) : Apprehending that the Āḻvār might, in the exuberance of his God-love, once again entertain fears similar to those voiced forth by him, in the third decad, the Lord wanted to dispel the Āḻvār's fears, with no chance whatever of their revival. He, therefore, revealed to the Āḻvār, His invulnerable abode in Tirucceṅkuṉṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu (Kerala State), out of bounds to the ungodly, attended by the mighty band of three thousand Vedic scholars, full of devotion. As a further precaution, the Lord also exhibited to the Āḻvār, His wondrous deeds, revealing His extra-ordinary prowess and valour. With his fears thus totally eradicated, the Āḻvār could whole-heartedly enjoy *in the fourth decad* the Lord's exquisite beauty;

(VIII-5) : The intense mental enjoyment of the Lord's regal Form, enchanting, every inch, resorted to, by the Āḻvār, in the seventh song of the fourth decad, once again resulted in a deep yearning, an insatiable longing for external perception of the Lord's Form, as envisioned by him and getting locked in His sweet embrace. Non-fulfilment of his longing has consigned the Āḻvār to the bottom-most depths of dejection, the like of which has not been witnessed, in the earlier decads. He cried out his misery, *in the fifth decad*, like unto one bodily trapped in a forest fire and his limbs appear to be even more worn out than their owner. The Saint beckons the Lord to appear before him, in all His splendour, wearing His crown, tall and majestic and moving along, like the exhilarating rain-cloud, the rising Sun, so on and so forth. The Lord did not, however, respond and so, this decad ends on a despondent note, the Āḻvār being led to believe that he would pass away, immured in grief;

(VIII-6) : Stung by a deep sense of remorse over His laxity in not responding to the Āḻvār's invitation, the Lord pondered over the steps to be taken by Him to placate the Āḻvār. But then, if He straightaway presented Himself

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before the Āḻvār, in his present state of mind, he would just collapse due to excessive joy. It was, therefore, expedient that the Āḻvār's enjoyment of the Lord should be induced by stages, so as to be stable, without anything untoward happening. The Lord, therefore, stationed Himself in Tirukkaṭittānam (a pilgrim centre in Kerala State), so as to enable the Āḻvār to go over there and mingle with Him freely. The Āḻvār, who got scent of it, felt elated over the Lord's overwhelming love for him and gave vent to his resultant joy *in the sixth decad*;

(VIII-7) : The Lord's desire to get at the subject, His coveted belonging, is very much more than that of the Āḻvār to get hold of Him. The Lord, therefore, mingles with the Āḻvār, with such an inordinate longing that the Āḻvār realises, with a stinging sense of shame, that he had tried to reverse the role, by begging of the Lord for his redemption, overlooking the fact that it was the Lord who was all along the supplicant for the Āḻvār's love unto Him. It is an exceedingly grateful Āḻvār that acknowledges *in the seventh decad*, with great feeling, the enormous love bestowed by the Lord on the individual soul, as the indefatigable cultivator of God-love, in the latter The bliss enjoyed by the Āḻvār, in this context, stands on a pedestal of its own and it can even be asserted that there is no comparable decad in the entire hymnal ;

(VIII-8) : No doubt, the Āḻvār gave vent to his great jubilation, in the seventh decad and even so, in the eighth song of that decad, he referred to himself as a frail being with whom the great Lord of unlimited prowess has chosen to mingle freely and stay on. The Lord noticed, with great concern, the revival of the earlier tendency of the Āḻvār to shrink back from Him, with a frightful sense of his own pettiness, in contra-distinction to the Lord's grandeur of unlimited dimensions. Therefore, He wanted to quell the Āḻvār's notion of the Soul's pettiness by revealing to him its real grandeur. But then, the soul, like unto a mere fire-fly, may not hold out any appeal to the Āḻvār, profoundly struck by the Lord's exquisite charm. The Lord, therefore, revealed to the Āḻvār, His charm first, and then, the grandeur of the Āḻvār's soul, in its relation of liegeship to the Sovereign Lord, as delectable unto Him as His ornaments Ānd so, *in the eighth decad*, the Āḻvār dwells on the intrinsic beauty of the soul, as the exclusive vassal of the Lord, as revealed by the Lord Himself;

(VIII-9) : Seeing that Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī (Āḻvār) has come off marriageable age, the parents make known to the folks, in the town, their intention to get her married to an eligible bachelor. The Nāyakī is, however, fiercely steeped in the Supreme Lord and, as a matter of fact, she has already had secret contacts with the Lord, enshrined in Kuṭṭanāttu Tiruppuliyūr (Kerala State), of which her parents were not aware. The mate, who enjoys the Nāyakī's confidence, however, knew about it from her speech and comportment but she was afraid of inviting the wrath of the elders, if she publicised the truth about the Nāyakī. At the same time, she did not want that the elders should go ahead, with their plans and so, as a *via-media*, the mate makes it appear that she has just got to know about the Nāyakī's affair with the Lord, at the aforesaid pilgrim centre. The mate further impresses upon the elders that,

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in view of this development, it would no longer be feasible for them to pursue their former plans. This brings to the fore, the Nāyaki's inalienability from the Lord to whom she stands solely dedicated, as the object of His exclusive enjoyment. Thus the essential nature of the soul, as set out in the eighth decad, gets crystallised still further, *in the ninth decad.*

(This is the last of the three decads, in the entire hymnal, put in the mouth of Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki's mate, the earlier ones being IV-6 and VI-5).

(VIII-10) : The subject's exclusive dependence on the Supreme Lord was emphasised in the preceding decad. And now, service unto the Lord's devotees, the logical culmination of service to the Lord, is dealt with, *in the concluding Centum of this decad.* No doubt, the essential nature of the soul, with special emphasis on the concept of servanthood (Śesatva), as the Lord's vassal, extending up to His devotees, was already set out in III-7 (Payilum Cuṭaroḷi). We, however, see, in this decad, the Āḻvār intensely longing for the fulfilment of such service, constituting the final goal. Being the liege, unto the Lord's favourite apostles and Saints on Earth, is deemed to be a greater virtue, carrying a greater value than direct allegiance to the Lord Himself.

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ERRATA (Vol. III)

PAGE	LINE	
515	5	Insert , after 'saw', Centum' and 'onwards'
,,	8	Insert , after ' which '.
,,	13	*For* Alvar *read as* Āḻvār.
,,	16	Insert , after ' do '.
,,	18	*For* tran- *read as* trans-.
516	7	(From bottom) substitute ' for !
517	9	*For* muḻaṅkum *read as* muḻaṅkum.
521	3	*For* ins parable *read as* inseparable.
,,	15	Insert , after ' beneficiary '.
523	18	*For* Caṭakōpaū *read as* Caṭakōpaṉ.
524	12	(From bottom) delete ' of '.
531	9	*For* handfull *read as* handful.
532	23	*For* Em ār *read as* Empār.
534	12	(From bottom) insert , after ' grand '.
537	8	Delete ' the ' before ' Lord '
539	4	(From bottom) delete, before ' Ye '.
540	3	*For* 'are one-' *read as* ' any one '.
,,	12	*For* him *read as* Him.
542	9	Insert — after ' praise '.
543	12	*For* Devas *read as* Devas'.
,,	12	(From bottom) *For* of *read as* to.
547	18	*For* Recountingt he *read as* Recounting the
565	8	*For* Porumal *read as* Poruṉal.
569	2	(From bottom) insert , before ' with '.
576	4	*For* dōtura *read as* dātura.
577	13	*For* enquiries *read as* enquires.
581	11	*For* aprt *read as* apart.
583	2	(From bottom) *For* ulakkaṅkaḷ *read as* ulakaṅkaḷ.
584	19	*For* Āḻvrā *read as* Āḻvār.
610	13	*For* a *read as* as.
613	17	(From bottom) *For* Ṛṣhis *read as* Ṛṣīs.
619	12	(From bottom) delete, after ' then '.
,,	11	(From bottom) *For* flocking *read as* knocking.
620	14	Delete ;
622	3	(From bottom) insert , after ' conceit '.
630	6	Delete , before ' are '.
634	2	*For* Son *read as* on.
,,	5	*For* literarally *read as* literally.
635	2	Delete ?
,,	15	Delete , after ' all '.
636	5	Insert '' after ' Sanctifier '.
638	15	(From bottom) insert ' in ' after 'being '.

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PAGE	LINE	
639	1	Delete ' after Lord and insert the following : Raṅganātha, by virtue of the special circumstance of his birth, is said to have requested the Deity, "oh Lord!
643	6	Insert , before ' with '.
644	8	Insert , at the end.
,,	15	*For* counselli *read as* counsell-.
645	6	(From bottom) *For* reasons *read as* reason.
649	7	*For* inpenetrable *read as* impenetrable.
650	14	(From bottom) Delete) after 4.
657	1	Insert , before ' fat '.
,,	6	*For* Warriers *read as* Warriors.
659	14	Substitue ; for , after ' galore '.
,,	13	(From bottom) delete , before ' held '
661	6	Delete the whole line
,,	3	(From bottom) insert , before ' out '.
662	2	*For* Ayodhā *read as* Ayodhyā.
,,	11	*For* Avtāra *read as* Avatāra.
,,	6	(From bottom) delete ' to ' and insert ,
,,	5	(From bottom) add ' to ' at the end.
664	5	(From bottom) *For* smoe *read as* some.
,,	4	(From bottom) insert , after ' we ' and delete ' and ' after 'men'.
665	8	(From bottom) delete , before ' though ' and insert , before ' coming '.
668	6	*For* Ican *read as* Īcaṉ.
669	Last	*For* to day *read as* today.
670	10	(From bottom) insert , after ' nature '.
674	12	Insert , after ' great '
,,	20	Delete ' before ' longs '
675	2	*For* ' hail storm ' *read as* hailstorm.
,,	19	*For* iunto *read as* unto.
,,	22	*For* you *read as* You.
676	10	(From bottom) insert after ' him ' and ' pleasures '.
677	15	(From bottom) delete after ' Brahmā '.
680	5	(From bottom) delete that '.
681	8	Delete , after Āḻvār.
683	17	*For* enojoy *read as* enjoy.
,,	5	(From bottom) *For* in so far *read as* insofar.
686	9	(From bottom) *For* identity *read as* identify.
687	11	Insert , after ' life '.
691	5	(From bottom) *For* theif *read as* thief.
692	7	*For* mately *read as* ly.
693	11	(From bottom) insert , after Lord.
694	2	Delete ;
695	13	(From bottom) *For* act *read as* acts.
,,	,,	(From bottom) *For* conseguences *read as* consequences.
697	14	*For* enjoying *read as* enjoy.

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PAGE	LINE	
697	19	Insert ' the ' before ' Lord '.
699	7	(From bottom) *For* tune *read as* time.
700	12	*For* eōtiyai *read as* cōtiyai.
,,	9	(From bottom) insert , after ' it '.
,,	6	(From bottom) insert , after 'singing '.
701	5	(From bottom) *For* month *read as* mouth.
702	Last	Insert , before ' actually '.
703	1	*For* Dharśana *read as* Dharśanam.
,,	11	(From bottom) *For* ectin *read as* ection.
704	9	Insert after ' song ' (Samson Agonistes).
708	6	*For* be *read as* he.
,,	7	Insert , after Him.
,,	9	*For* erronerous *read as* erroneous.
,,	11	Insert , after ' on '.
,,	10	(From bottom) insert , at the end.
,,	5	(From bottom) *For* ' words ' *read as* ' word '.
709	8	*For* would *read as* wouldn't.
710	5	(From bottom) *For* maṭil *read as* matil.
711	16	*For* vaykkum *read as* vāykkum.
,,	8	(From bottom) insert , before more.
713	1	Insert , after 'Nampi ' and substitute ? for ! after ' You'.
,,	2	Insert , after Sire.
,,	4	Insert '' before ' said ' and delete '' after ' Lord '
715	7	*For* totto *read as* toto.
716	5	*For* tripled *read as* triple-eyed.
,,	10	(From bottom) substitute , for full-stop, at the end.
,,	3	(From bottom) insert , after ' leg '.
717	12	Insert , at the end.
,,	16	Insert , after ' Mahāviṣṇu '.
,,	6	(From bottom) *For* ' For ' *read as* ' for '.
718	7	*For* ' is ' after ' that ' *read as* ' it '.
,,	18	*For* full-stop, at the end, substitute ,
,,	3	(From bottom) substitute , for full-stop after ' word '.
721	5	*For* me *read as* men.
,,	9	Insert , after ' state '.
,,	20	Insert , after ' experience '.
,,	14	(From bottom) *For* narrowing *read as* harrowing.
,,	13	(From bottom) *For* he *read as* He.
723	15	(From bottom) *For* requsts *read as* requests.
726	6	*For* angles *read as* angels.
,,	7	*For* samsarīs *read as* samsārīs.
,,	10	Insert , after ' end '.
730	14	*For* sistuations *read as* situations.
732	22	Insert , after ' beings '.
733	14	*For* halve *read as* halves.
734	14	*For* objuring *read as* abjuring.

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PAGE	LINE	
735	15	(From bottom) delete , after ' You '.
740	10	*For* some *read as* come.
742	8	*For* pāṭu *read as* pāṭu.
744	23	*For* Kaneit *read as* Kañcit.
,,	11	(From bottom) insert , after ' terms '.
745	2	*For* selfless *read as* selfless.
747	15	*For* resent *read as* resents.
,,	12	(From bottom) *For* Aśrtavatsala *read as* Āśṛtavatsala.
748	15	Insert , after ' matched '.
749	3	Insert , before ' in '.
752	11	Delete , after ' graciously '.
753	11	Delete , before ' felt '.
755	15	*For* strenth *read as* strength.
756	14	*For* ther *read as* there.
760	12	Delete ' of ' after ' inside '.
761	15	*For* measuing *read as* measuring.
763	8	*For* Kurukūre *read as* Kurukūrc.
765	9	(From bottom) delete , before ' the ' and insert ' to '.
,,	Last	Delete , before ' first '.
769	20	Insert ' were ' before ' thus '.
770	18	Delete ' whose ' before ' hearts '.
,,	8	(From bottom) *For* vimocanadayah *read as* vimocanādayah.
,,	,,	*For* leela *read as* līlā.
775	Last	*For* ntense *read as* intense
776	6	*For* decade *read as* decad.
788	2	*For* notriety *read as* notoriety.
,,	6	(From bottom) *For* it after ' all ' *read as* its.
780	4	(From bottom) *For* Āācarya *read as* Ācārya.
782	13	(From bottom) *For* Kuḷaṅkal *read as* Kuḷāṅkal.
,,	3	(From bottom) insert , before ' yet '.
783	14	*For* Lorp *read as* Lord.
785	6	Substitute , for the full-stop, at the end.
,,	7	*For* Being *read as* being
,,	13	(From bottom) insert , before ' in '
787	2	Insert , after ' Lord '.
,,	9	*For* tantū *read as* tantu
790	2	Insert , after ' wonders '.
,,	7	Insert ' for ' before ' the '
791	13	(From bottom) *For* relased *read as* relaxed.
792	6	Insert , at the end.
794	21	Insert , after ' only '.
796	1	Insert , at the beginning ; delete ' been '.
,,	18	Insert , before ' for '.
797	15	(From bottom) insert , after 'pauper '.
798	18	*For* complele *read as* complete.
802	5	(From bottom) *For* duy *read as* duly.

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Page	Line	
802	2	(From bottom) *For* astomachs *read as* stomachs.
806	14	(From bottom) *For* Introduct on, *read as* Appendix, Vol IV.
808	13	*For* grea- *read as* great.
,,	14	*For* permist *read as* permis-
809	16	Insert ' I ' after ' have '.
810	16	(From bottom) *For* graciosusly *read as* graciously
812	20	*For* know *read as* known.
813	7	Delete " before ' asking ' and insert " before ' what '.
815	7	*For* expoun *read as* expounding.
817	20	Delete the full-stop at the end.
821	16	(From bottom) *For* heart read hearth
,,	12	(From bottom) insert , before ' at '.
824	15	*For* Kaṇṇapiāṉ *read as* Kaṇṇapirāṉ.
825	13	*For* neṭumārku *read as* neṭumārku.
,,	9	(From bottom) *For* steepep *read as* steeped.
826	15	(From bottom) delete ' to ' before ' greater '.
827	2	Delete :
830	3	(From bottom) *For* by-on-means *read as* by-no-means
833	Last	Insert , after ' mount ' and after 'orchards '.

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